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The SMART SET

*A Magazine of
Cleverness*



*A Female of the Species
More Alluring Than the Mail*

LONDON

JOHN ADAMS THAYER CORPORATION

462 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

PARIS

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FIFTH AVENUE & 37TH STREET
NEW YORK

THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF
CLEVERNESS

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Honesty in Advertising

JAMES HOWARD KEHLER

Advertising Agent, Chicago

MOST people still look upon Advertising as merely the self-interested effort of manufacturers to sell more goods. It is much *more* than that. It is a real distributive force, a definite factor in economic progress, and as such bears as vital a relation to the people as railroads, newspapers and other quasi-public institutions. It is a subject for laymen to understand and for legislators to take account of.

Advertising heretofore has been neglected by all but the men who make their living at it. The public is just beginning to understand that they, too, have an interest in it—just as they have awakened to the fact that they have an interest in the packing industry, in railroad operation, in banking, etc.

Men's *traditional* interests—in their government, for instance, which causes them to become wildly excited over elections; in the defense of their country through armies and navies; in such things as tariffs; in the nation's policies at home and its diplomacy abroad—are being *supplemented* by an intelligent interest in the things that concern them more personally and intimately. They are becoming interested in such things as the purity of foods, the honesty of fabrics and in general the integrity of the producing and distributing machinery that supplies all of us with practically everything that we eat, wear or use.

In all this change Advertising has been the most potent factor. Quite aside from its importance as the educative and distributive force which has revolutionized our standards and modes of living by its introduction of new products, inventions and methods, it has had the tremendous moral effect of *proving* that honesty pays better than anything else. It has proved, in fact, that a large and a profitable market cannot be built and *maintained* except upon integrity in the manufacture of goods and honesty in their presentation to the public.



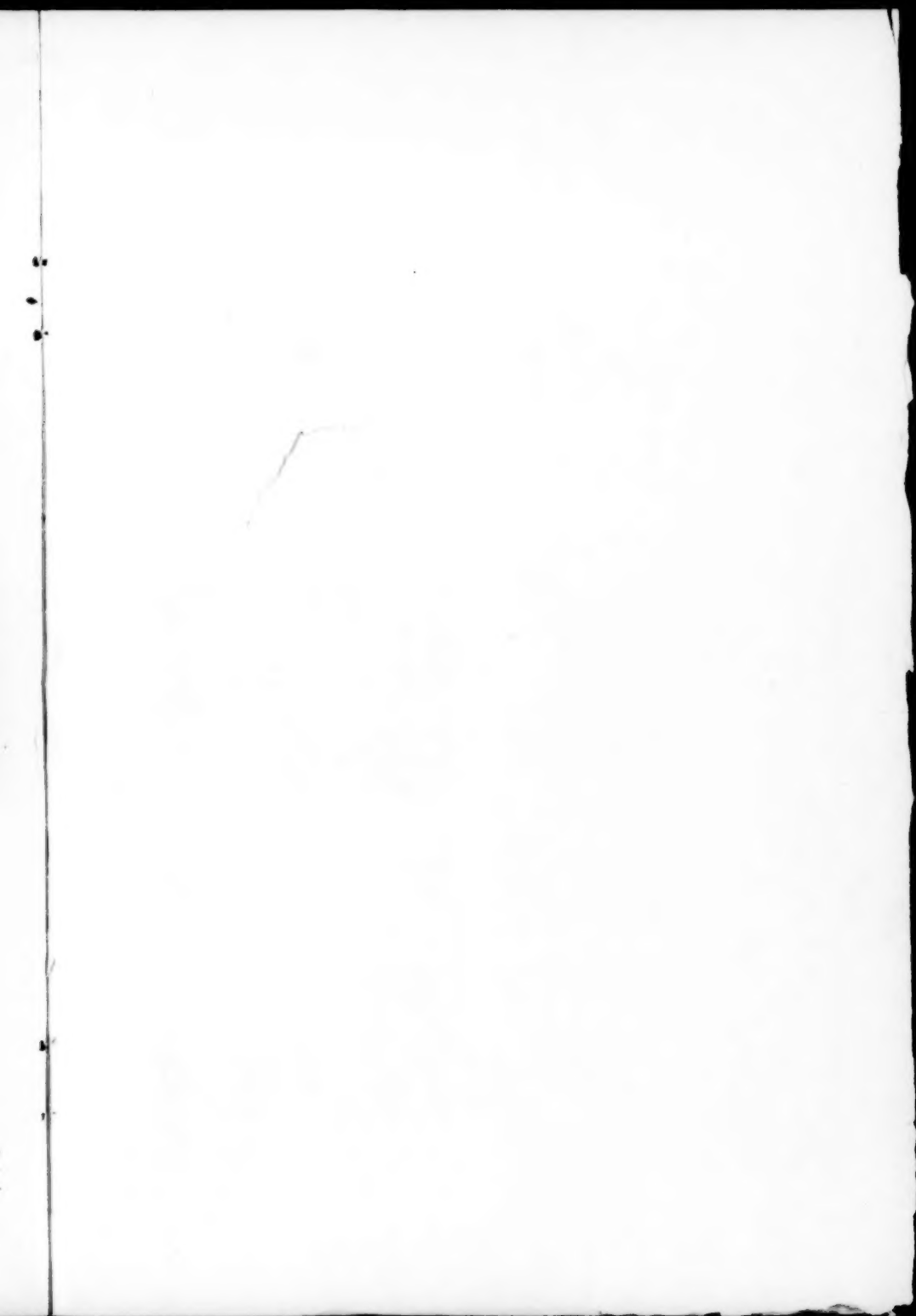
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JAMES HOWARD KEHLER

Before the days of trade-marks and national advertising there was a chance for the unfair manufacturer and his unworthy product. There was no one to hold him to account and no method of tracing his goods to their source. Now his *fortune* is represented by his *trade-mark* and the *public's good-will* toward that trade-mark. His greatest asset is the public good-will, and the only way to secure or to hold it is by putting merit into his goods and honesty into his advertising.

That is the reason that nationally advertised goods are safe to buy—that is why business is cleaner than it ever was before—that is why the leading national magazines are carrying as vital a message in their advertising pages—perhaps a more vital one—than in their editorial sections.

A study of advertising broadens the mind





THE TRUNK IN THE ATTIC

Painted specially for The Smart Set Magazine by Harry S. Potter

THE SMART SET

*Its Prime Purpose is to Provide Lively Entertainment
For Minds That Are Not Primitive*

THE MAGIC RUG

By Francis Perry Elliott

"NOW, if that wouldn't give you a pain!"

The good-looking young man there by the sidewalk curb once more conned the line of ancient storefronts, picturesquely shabby and decadent, that marked the heart of New York's Oriental quarter.

He knew it was the spot all right; it was the very street and block and end of the block into which he had stumbled last fall, and where he had purchased the supply of genuine Egyptian cigarettes. And yet—

"Where in thunder is the old pirate's store?"

Certainly there was nothing resembling it in that unbroken wall of frontages. Young Mr. Tom Bentley planted his cane gloomily and sighed.

Surely it was no trifling dilemma to come way down here to this beastly neighborhood and then be unable to locate the shop wherein he had made his purchase. It was the more exasperating, Mr. Bentley reflected indignantly, in view of the fact that he had taken the precaution to fix in mind the building's most salient detail with a view to future identification.

"Green," he ruminated dispiritedly; "that was the color—a sort of sickly, bilious green."

But no housefront of unhealthy complexion was in evidence now. Instead, there seemed a remarkable sameness of robust though dingy reds and Vandyke browns.

Mr. Bentley groaned as he faced a conclusion he had been hoping to avoid: "Blame thing's gone, that's all!"

Then his normally genial face grimaced incredulously.

"Can't be, though. Thing couldn't happen, you know. Not down here!"

Certainly not! Elsewhere in New York the city's fretful fever of demolition and reconstruction rages unrestrained. But it is different in lower Washington Street: there nothing is ever torn down. Nothing ever *has* been torn down in lower Washington Street within records of traditions handed down to its oldest living inhabitant. Consequently nothing ever has been rebuilt and of course never will be. Doubtless it was some uncanny prescience of this that led the change hating exiles of the mysterious Orient to preempt the section as their own.

"Hanged if it doesn't begin to seem as though I'd have to *look* for the place—actually look for it!"

Mr. Bentley leaned heavily upon his cane and pondered desperately, his mind

straining backward for some other detail to assist identification.

"By Jove—the cat!" How queer that he had forgotten about the cat! True, it had not been much of a cat, having the handicap of a temporary visual defect and a general aspect betraying inclinations toward a vicious and debauched career. But it was of importance now, because he recalled it as having been a fixture in the shop's doorway. Mr. Bentley recalled, too, that it was a black cat. He was downright sure about the matter of color in this instance, for the reason that the animal had affectionately moulted a quantity of it against his striped trousers.

But now the most wistful, searching scrutiny of doorways failed to detect the presence of a single cat.

"Why don't they keep their cats where they belong? How do they expect people to be able to—Hello! Was that a cat?"

Mr. Bentley straightened sharply. "Jove, I was *sure* I heard a cat!"

His eyes swept the doorways hopefully, but without reward. The thresholds along the block lay tenantless and bare, save where here and there a dark eyed Levantine lounged listlessly against the doorframes. There were few people astir, and the whole street lay wrapped in a lazy afternoon drowse. Mr. Bentley sighed disappointedly. He noted that the patrol of dogs in the street was liberal and well assorted, and it occurred to him that this explained in a measure the singular dearth of cats.

"Infernal shame!" he grumbled.

"Nothing to do now but just mosey down the block and poke my head into every beastly—"

His head lifted sharply. "Say, that was a cat—ah!"

A long-drawn plaintive wail, not unlike pussy's nocturnal minor, reached him from somewhere. Then came a gentle crescendo wheeze, followed by a gurgling sound, suggestive of someone concocting soap bubbles. An interval, and the whole was repeated.

The young man chuckled. "Some old Turk doing his afternoon siesta. Sounds like the old boy's pump needs a drop or two of oil. Why, hello, howdy do there!"

Young Mr. Bentley nodded cheerfully into the shadowed depths of the doorway immediately confronting him.

The old man seated therein sucked another wheezing gurgle from the *nargileh*, or water pipe, at his side, removed the tube from his lips and saluted gravely. A thin curl of gray smoke twisted from his lips. The young man drew nearer, hoping to recognize his cigarette dealer. Disappointment awaited him.

One glimpse into those deep set faded eyes, shot with saffron fires, was enough. They were wholly unfamiliar—unfamiliar, in fact, every feature of the grave, time-weathered face, tapering to its gray chin beard. Mr. Bentley noted the face admiringly. He thought he never had seen anything so near the proper hue of a well colored meerschaum pipe. Indeed, the owner of the little shop suggested a mellow-toned etching, well worth framing. The tawny brown color scheme embraced frazzled dressing robe and slippers and even the well worn fez crowning his head, its red now faded to a sober dun.

"Nice day!" The young man suggested it pleasantly.

The faded eyes dropped their lids. Again the long drawn whine, the wheeze, the gurgle—a fascinating moment of anxiety during which Mr. Bentley was sure the old man slept—and then a slow eruption of smoke.

"Great!" The youth breathed it admiringly, and was sympathetically moved to busy himself with a cigarette. Then he smiled ingratiatingly.

"I'm looking for a store I was in last fall, Mr. —er—" He bent nearer, cocking his head invitingly. "I didn't catch your name—"

"Name?" The tube was removed slowly. "Abou Hassan."

"Ah, Turkish!" Mr. Bentley prided himself upon his astuteness in judging from the fez.

Abou Hassan grunted. "Persian," he enunciated gravely.

"Oh, why, of course! Did I say Turkish? I meant Persian, you know—could see right off you were Persian! H'm—as I was saying, Mr. Hassan, I'm looking

for a shop I was in last fall—place where I bought some Egyptian cigarettes. I was wondering if you could give me a steer, don't you know—I mean direct me to it. It's a greenish colored building and—"

He paused expectantly, for the tube had been reluctantly withdrawn from between the withered lips. "Nex' door." An impatient jerk of the mouthpiece aided demonstration. Then the tube returned to its proper place, the eyes closed and the old fellow was off again.

"I wonder what he smokes?" speculated the youth, coughing. He sniffed an instant. "And yet," doubtfully, "I don't see how it *can* be shaved leather, either; I should think it would make him sick."

Again he bent forward, lifting his voice. "Um—don't think you quite understood me. Green house," he shouted, his hand to his mouth. "I don't mean greenhouse, you understand, but green house!"

"Nex' door."

Mr. Bentley's quick upward glance merely served to confirm his previous impression that the house next door was steadfastly and insistently *red*. He took a deep breath and brought his mouth close to the shriveled ear.

"Gre-e-e-n!" he screamed. "Same color as—er—leaves and grass—you know, stuff on ground—gra-a-a-ss!"

"Nex' door."

The words shrilled testily this time, the figure's whole body twisting with an emphasizing wriggle. Abou Hassan closed his eyes tightly, drew up his chin, and forthwith the *nargileh* bubbled and gurgled in furious ebullition, generating thick surges of smoke that wrapped him in defensive armor and banished Mr. Bentley to the sidewalk. But not before one coherent sentence had filtered through the cloud: "It been paint!" And as if to escape further questionings, the old man gathered up himself and his *nargileh* and shuffled into his shop.

"Can you beat it?" Mr. Bentley sidled up to the red structure and considered it critically. Yes, it was the same flyspecked window in which he had

first spied the funny gray packages of cigarettes. And there they were still, cuddled cheek by jowl with the same old jar of "Turkish Delight" and the same dusty heap of pistachio nuts. There, too, at the entrance was the glass door with the handpainted lily with blue leaves, and there—yes, there, twisting toward him as his foot lifted to the threshold, was the sable figure of the disreputable cat. Disreputable no longer, however, but sleek and shiny in the splendor of a carefully rehabilitated toilet. Unquestionably the furbishing of the house's exterior had not been without its moral effect.

And Mr. Tom Bentley, who had a kindly feeling for every living thing under the canopy, took time to stoop and apply a gentle and soothing friction to the glossy arch that writhed through a figure eight about his legs.

"A black cat!"—musingly. "Funny what a lot of fatheads in the world think black cats bring good luck—all that sort of rot!"

The black cat, its tail stiffened heavenward and its lithe body vibrating with a rapturous purr, lifted toward him two eyes narrowed to sleepy slits, and batted inscrutably. And just then—

There was an imperative double blast of a horn, a whirring crescendo, and a stunning blue auto swung up to the curb before him—or rather before the shop of Abou Hassan.

Young Mr. Bentley, following the instinct of a true motor enthusiast, involuntarily perked his head, and his careless, incurious glance ranged chauffeur and car. But at the tonneau his blue eyes tripped.

And there they hung—fixed, unwinking, slowly widening through a full minute's count. A soft whistle breathed through his lips, and the cigarette pendant therefrom dropped unheeded to the floor.

"Jove!" he gulped faintly.

The two ladies upon the cushions seemed to be hesitatingly considering Abou Hassan's shop. The elder of the two, a heavily upholstered matron with a fluffy white pompadour and beetling brows, was critically poisoning a lorgnette

above a rather beaklike, magisterial nose.

But young Mr. Bentley scarcely saw her—his concentration was elsewhere. Of a sudden his chest lifted in a long, deep sigh. For the girl—the girl had glanced his way!

She had looked up as though sensing his fixed, intense regard, and for five ravishing seconds her brown eyes had locked themselves with his. Then her glance dropped carelessly away.

"George!" With the ejaculation, Mr. Bentley lay back against the wall, just out of view, and seemed constrained to fan himself several times with his straw hat.

"To think of her coming at last," he murmured, "the girl I mean to marry! And coming in *such* a way!"

A whimsical smile touched his lip as he studied the black figure strenuously shouldering his left leg.

"I say, I wonder if *you* had anything to do with this?"

Stooping, he conferred a final pat and rub upon the black cat. Then he straightened up, prepared to peep again, but with care.

"If old parrot face sees me, she may whisk my darling away," he considered; "and then I'll never, never know who she is nor see her again. And both our lives will be ruined forever!"

The lady of the lorgnette was speaking—and tartly:

"Would I have Emile stop here if I were *not* sure it is the place?" She shrugged, twisting her lip in a sour smile. "Really, my dear," with uplift of the magisterial brows, "you do ask such silly questions!"

The girl murmured something hastily.

"Pre-cisely!"—the prim enunciation was razor-edged. "And this is near the Battery—or comparatively near—isn't it?" Then she sighed. "But that is always the way with you, my dear—you never seem to think of more than one thing at a time, and you don't seem to remember that Mrs. Van Stuphem also said that the place where she found her Persian rug was on a corner and next to a red building." Then triumphantly: "Now, *don't* you see that this is on a

corner, and that *that* is a red building?" The lorgnette jerked toward the cigarette store, and Mr. Bentley dodged. "My dear child, if you would only try to use your memory sometimes! It was only last fall that Mrs. Van Stuphem told us about it."

Young Mr. Bentley grinned for reasons of his own. "Last fall!" He snorted softly to himself. "Red building!"

Then he forgot about it in view of the fact that the girl's eyes had again touched the doorway. Bentley, despite his excellent nerves, jerked as under the application of a galvanic wire. By Jove, *could* she see him? He could not be quite sure, for, being a young man wise in his generation, he was taking his observations by the mirrored reflections in the wide open glass door. But it looked as though there was just the ghost of a smile in the reflected image of her mouth—but that *might* be a flaw in the glass. But on the other hand—

Young Bentley's aforesaid excellent nerves—perhaps, to be precise, the *plural* form should not be used here—took no chances. He administered an adjusting yank to a crimson tie rather smartly flecked with orange wishbones, and his fine teeth parted in a smile—a smile deliberate and of cheerful cognizance. Then he winked.

It was a careful wink—the kind that is made by slowly lifting the cheek to meet the eyelid. The visible results were more than satisfactory.

"Got her, by crikey!" he breathed delightedly and with excitement. "Got her, full and square!"

Then a shade of apprehension crossed his face.

"Um! I wonder if she's the kind to go and tell mamma? If she does, I'll know—"

"Are you coming, Dorothy?"

There was sweetness, all astringent, in the measured inflection of the lady upon the sidewalk. With admirable grace and skill she had disengaged from the car a figure of imposing Junoesque proportions. The smile she turned was dental, but wintry. A murmur, and the girl was beside her.

"Dorothy!" Bentley breathed the

name reverently, lingeringly. It was just the kind of name he had always known she would have!

The delicately poised lorgnette was gesturing a remonstrance.

"How often, my dear, must I tell you always to step from a car—never to jump?" She sighed. "You are *so* un-reposeful!"

Again the Junoesque bosom lifted, this time ponderously, relaxing sharply with a sound supposed to evidence a patient weariness, but which to Mr. Bentley's practical ear sounded not unlike the quick exhaust of an airbrake.

"And how flushed it has made you! If you could only see yourself!"

But she could not. Nor apparently did she see that in her flight to earth her hand had released a little square of tan leather—some kind of cardcase, evidently.

Bentley's eye lit upon it hungrily. But there was another who had seen.

"Mademoiselle!" called the French chauffeur. "Mademoiselle Morton!" And as the young lady turned, he smilingly indicated the fallen case.

"Stupid ass!" The hiss was Bentley's, and his venom was augmented by reason of the smile the girl flashed the chauffeur as she lightly stooped and retrieved her property.

The parrot-faced lady's tongue clicked. "Well, upon my word!"

"What an old lime!" Bentley growled. Then indignantly: "Nice sort of mother! The idea of her nagging that lovely, divine creature!"

"Why, my dear!" The exclamation was one of pained surprise as the ubiquitous lorgnette was laid dramatically upon the cardcase. Then sternly: "Isn't that the souvenir case Herbert brought you home from college this spring? Oh, how frightfully careless you always are, my dear—*so* different from my dear boy!" She shook her head with tightened lips.

"Really, Dorothy, sometimes I scarcely can believe you are of the same blood, the same—" Her gesture wafted the subject away as hopeless. Then sharply: "I only wish I had told Herbert not to bring you anything back from London."

The eyes of the young man inside snapped blue fire.

"The old she-dragon!" he snarled beneath his breath. "Never mind!" His jaw clicked. "Just wait—just you *wait*, old girl! If I don't soften you down after my darling and I are—"

He cocked his head to catch some caution the lady was addressing to her chauffeur. It seemed to refer to "other dogs."

"For you know, Emile, how extremely sensitive Agamemnon is." Then in a lowered tone: "He is still sleeping, but we are leaving the door of the car open so he may join us if he wakes." Her glance lingered dubiously upon a member of the dog patrol that had paused for an inspection of the ashcan. "You *will* be careful—very watchful, will you not, Emile? Don't leave him alone a second!"

"*Oui, madame!*" came from under the circumflex mustache. Emile's eye seemed to cut surreptitiously at a little Italian wineshop on the other side of the street.

Then he shot the car backward into the shade. Incidentally, the action also threw the vehicle out of range from the shop.

"Oh, that is *so* thoughtful of you, Emile—so thoughtful!" Emile shrugged a modest disclaimer. "For we shall be quite half an hour—probably longer." She shifted a step forward. "Dorothy," with a wintry uplift of brows, "are you coming inside, or are you going to stand here on the public street all—" The rest was lost as the shop's portals swallowed them.

Bentley scowled. "The old cat!" Then he looked down. "I *beg* your pardon, kitty!" And he stepped briskly out upon the sidewalk. The field was clear. Already the thirsty Emile had ducked behind the swinging door across the way. With feet braced apart and cane poised in both hands, the young man addressed himself to the data in hand:

"Let's see now: name, Dorothy—Dorothy Morton"—he breathed it softly, like a prayer; by Jove, he owed the chauffeur that much! "Got brother named Herbert—college chap—wonder

what college?" He tried to recall any "Herbert" he had known at Harvard, and gave it up. "Then there's a beastly dog in the car somewhere—dog named—" What was the brute's fool name? "And a mother," scowlingly.

"Jove, the sooner I get my darling out of that old harridan's hands the better! But first—first, of course, I must get acquainted." He looked at his watch, his strong mouth shaping whimsically. "A half-hour, she said. Um—and five minutes gone already! Twenty-five minutes, Tommy," he breathed sharply, "to get acquainted *and* engaged! A little close—a little close; but you *can* do it if you hump yourself!"

II

ABOU HASSAN tendered the tiny cup with a profound obeisance.

"P'raps you no like Turk'sh cof'," he suggested doubtfully. He shook his head apologetically. "Not sweet—no sug'r. We not use." He was greatly relieved as the lady smiled after sipping it. "It's delicious!" she said.

She shifted a little in the strange chair lavishly inlaid with mother-of-pearl. The movement was necessary in order to cover a shudder as she swallowed the muddy sediment, black and thick. Such complaisance was not usual with the lady. But upon the present occasion it was part of the routine of necessary diplomacy, leading up to the real purpose of her visit—the acquisition of an antique rug that that born bargain sharp and curio hunter, Mrs. Van Stuphem, had told her of seeing while she was delving through the shops of the Oriental quarter buying laces and embroideries.

"At just one-third what you pay on Broadway or the Avenue, my dear, think of that! Of course it's not *our* business how they are able to sell laces for what they do!" Mrs. Van Stuphem had shrugged significantly, her eyes narrowing with the crafty cunning of the bargain hunter. "And I thought of you, my dear, the very moment I saw that rug—but I didn't dare say a word, for he *knows* me."

The rug had been spied upon a low couch in a little room behind the shop—a room into which Mrs. Van Stuphem had had the foresight to poke her head.

"And they had been sleeping upon it, my dear—think of that—*sleeping* upon it!"

Mrs. Van Stuphem's disgust over this vandalism was largely mitigated by the fact that the dealer unquestionably did not know the value of it—none of them down in the quarter being rug dealers, as she explained. This fortunate circumstance Mrs. Van Stuphem was disposed to dwell upon as something like a dispensation of Providence.

"You ought to be able to get it for a song, my dear."

And it was then that she had lent an impressive caution:

"But if you go down there, on no account let the old rascal suppose you are looking for *rugs*! Never! Look at everything, price everything—buy if you like—but on no account mention rugs until after you've had your coffee."

And then she had explained that the proffer of Oriental hospitality was a necessary incident to bargaining, and something not to be declined without offense.

"And when you have it, my dear, drink it if it chokes you," she had emphasized. "This means everything down there in Washington Street. When you've partaken of their hospitality, they're less likely to take advantage of you—in fact, they *can't* take advantage of you then—it's something or other in their silly religion, you see."

Then she had hastened to add:

"But that don't bind *you*, you know—you're a Christian; and so, you can get the most wonderful bargains! Why, after you've drunk their coffee they'll take whatever you offer them—I'm not sure, but I believe they *have* to take it!"

And it was in pursuance of this sagacious policy laid down by her friend that she had rustled silkenly twice around the long, narrow shop, pricing here and buying there, all with an effort of interest and an expenditure of largess that would insure the sacred rite of coffee. But nowhere yet had she seen aught of rug or carpet. Even the back room

that had figured so prominently in Mrs. Van Stuphem's account was missing.

"Strange!" But she breathed it to herself, her lorgnette again sweeping the walls from end to end.

Only once had she allowed her concentration to waver. It was when she saw Dorothy distracting the attention of the dealer by some silly questionings about a dainty kimono from the looms of Broussa.

"My dear," she had said sweetly, "don't you think you would occupy yourself better by staying near the front, where you may see Agamemnon if he wakes? I am so afraid of some shock to him, and surely you are not deliberately forgetting what the specialist told us about his liver!"

Meantime the lady herself went on foregathering brocades, damasks and dainty silken things from Damascus and Aleppo. These she had placed aside with tablecovers of drawnwork, scarfs of gold and silver filigree and gaudy slippers of bead and tinsel. She had bought a pendent lamp of delicately chiseled brasswork, not because she wanted it, but because the old dealer, who everywhere shuffled after her rubbing his hands, seemed to think she ought to want it.

And over everything she had affected a childish delight, this giving her an opportunity to turn about quickly here and there and poke into shadowy places where a rug might be laid aside. There were so many odd cubbyholes and alcoves glutted with the strange *olla podrida* of the Orient. Yet her persistence remained unrewarded.

And yet, unless the man had sold it, she knew the rug was there. Mrs. Van Stuphem had positively seen it—and this was the place, a corner shop of curios, next to a bright red building. There could be no mistake.

"And just think, my dear, just think," she had said, "it might be a genuine diamond Kerman—*might* be, you know!"

Not but what upon the polished floors of her home reposed more than one "genuine diamond Kerman," bought for such at a fabulous price and admired and

envied by her friends. But she knew they were not.

She had a *penchant* for many fads and hobbies, some of which she rode superficially enough; but if there was one thing she did know about, had cultivated to an extreme, it was a mad passion for the real antique rug. And the lady knew that real antique rugs were rarer than white diamonds and pigeon blood rubies. Therefore to get upon the scent of one was a rare privilege, well worth the expenditure of a world of hard work.

And how hard she had been working she did not realize until she had dropped at last into the pearl-inlaid chair before the little *sofra* or low table in the back of the store and had settled for a conference with Abou Hassan. And then had come the coffee.

Despite its thickness and bitter taste, she found it quickly and singularly refreshing. She wished that Mrs. Van Stuphem had not told her that it was an article of creed in the making of Turkish coffee never to wash the pot.

Meantime the old dealer, after sipping a cup tentatively, had stood by, ready to wait upon her, his face almost smiling, the red lights in his eyeballs gleaming with a fire that the matron indifferently estimated as senile admiration. She would have been surprised to know that if the Oriental thought of her face at all it was to deplore contemptuously the absence of the *yashmak* or face veil, without which it was immodest for a woman to appear before a man. But of course the *khanum*, being an infidel, would not know this teaching of the Prophet.

The *khanum*, sipping amicably, looked about her with an air of pleasant interest.

"I feel just as though I were in the 'Arabian Nights,'" she said, nodding. "It might be a shop in Bagdad!" She turned to him inquiringly. "You know book—'Arabian Nights?' You know about Scheherazade and Aladdin?"

Did he! The fires in his feeble eyes brightened in glow as he murmured assent. He knew it all in a softer and more musical language, but he could not tell the *khanum* that.

"I read it all when I was a girl," she

informed him, "and I never, never forgot it. I remember I believed every word of it." Her thick throat gurgled a moment over the absurd credulity of childhood.

Abou Hassan's eyes seemed to cloud, filmlike. His face took on a stolid look. Indefinably she sensed that *he* believed it all still! It aroused an impatience in her.

"You don't believe any of that, do you?" Then, as he eyed her steadily but without reply: "All that pack of nonsense about enchantments and genii and magic things? Stuff!"

Here she suddenly realized that she was losing hold upon her unwonted affability, was drifting upon impolitic ground. She forced a smile again, assuming a soothing tone of remonstrance:

"This is the twentieth century, and people don't believe such things now, you know." Then she went on persistently: "If such things ever *had* happened, don't you know they could happen now?"

Abou Hassan eyed her gravely. It was hopeless to speak words of wisdom to a woman, of course, but he did not wish to offend her. She had been a good customer, and might come again.

"Our Persian poet, Hafiz," he murmured, "has a verse which means: 'That which has been may be again; and that which has been thought may come to be.'"

But the lady scarcely heard him, for with the completion of the coffee drinking, her mind had come back to the chief business in hand. Now was the time to push matters.

"These shelves"—indicating with her lorgnette the tier that filled the back of the store from floor to halfway up the wall—"what do you keep in these—*this* shelf, for instance?"

He hastened to show her, bringing to a *sofa* a dolman stiff with gold and a pyramid of Persian shawls and brocades from India. Under her incentive he went on, mining choice muslins of Bengal, whole armfuls of limp dressing gowns of Broussa silk and boxes of variegated and embroidered fabrics.

The scent of sandalwood and berga-

mot filled the air, and though the lady was not given to foolish fancies, there came with it all a sense of removal to far-off mystic climes—of relegation to strange outlandish times.

Of her own accord the lady pulled out the drawer of a walnut filigree dressing table.

Her hand brought out a fan of argus plumage and a mirror inlaid with mother-of-pearl and jewel glass—one that showed marks of usage, a fact that but added to its value, betraying that it had served Fatima—perhaps many Fatimas—in the preparation of the toilet she would coquettishly display when Nouredin passed her casement.

"That ver' fine, lady." And Abou Hassan hung it upon the wall that she might see its decorative possibilities.

But the lady never even looked. The time had long passed since a mirror possessed attractions for her as a mural decoration.

In fact, though she continued to fire batteries of questions as to the contents of this space and that, she was nearly at her wit's end. She had failed to find any signs of a rug held in reserve, and Mrs. Van Stuphem's warnings had impressed her with the danger of asking about one.

"They're so mortally afraid of the Custom House, my dear," had been her interpretation of it.

Mrs. Van Stuphem had had some scandalous experiences with the Custom House herself—things that couldn't be kept out of the papers, and that had cost her husband—known in the "Street" as "Old Hook" Stuphem—a world of influential exertion to fix up and save Mrs. Van Stuphem from jail.

"Have you a *rug* of any kind?"

The question came out at last, cleaving the lady's lips almost without her volition. There seemed no other course.

"A rug of any kind—of *any* kind," she made haste to emphasize. The lady put it rather ingeniously. She *had* rugs, she explained—oh, the best from Tiflis and Persia and Constantinople; but she just wanted one from here—to be able to say she had bought it where she had bought all of her other lovely Oriental things.

"You just *must* find me a rug!" she enthused.

To her consternation, the little old dealer shook his fez and murmured sorrow. Indeed, he seemed quite earnest about it.

"Oh, you must have a rug of *some* kind!" The beetling brows contracted disappointedly. "Anything, you know, will do—even if it's something you've been using yourself."

Even this concession failed of result. Again the old man emphasized that he was sorry—very sorry. In fact, the black tassel of his faded fez hung quite droopingly forward as the shabby figure genuflected regret and self-abasement. The brown, withered hands curved one upon the other, cuplike, making a soothing "swash" as they rubbed.

"No rug, lady, 't all." Then hopefully: "Drape-ree—ver' soft, fine colors, ver' del'cate, lady; from Al'xandree"—he began pawing eagerly at a shelf—"and Smyrna and Damascus—"

"Rugs!" The lady's crisp incisiveness stopped him. "Rugs!" she emphasized again. Then she glanced about with an air of careless significance.

"I'd just love to take that brass coffer you showed me—though it *is* rather expensive for its size—and one or two of these pearl-inlaid coffee tables and—oh, yes, that walnut filigree dressing table." Her eye searched further, and she lifted a jewel case from the *sofra* beside her. "And this, too—what did you call it?"

The dealer's eye glittered. "A *chek-meje*, lady—what you call jewel case." His hands rubbed with great animation. Rare indeed that he had so profitable a customer! "It—oh, ver' fine, lady. See, what you call inlay—all gold," impressively; "and these pearls of Ophir, and these opals from Bohemia."

"Yes, it would be so nice to have, if I had the dressing table." Then craftily: "But I wouldn't care for the dressing table or the other furniture unless I had a rug—from the same place—to go with it and give the proper—er—atmosphere." Then with an engaging smile: "Are you quite *sure* now you can't find me a rug somewhere?"

Abou Hassan's head sidled a dejected negative.

The matron's tongue clicked. She felt herself flushing, a sure premonition to her that she was losing her temper. The man had either disposed of the rug Mrs. Van Stuphem had seen, or else he was concealing his possession of it. She would test the matter.

"Let me see, didn't you"—her tone edged a little—"didn't you have an old rug here last fall—on a couch, in a little room that was partitioned here then?" She widened her eyes challengingly. "Remember?"

Very positively he was shaking his head.

"Nev' lady. No rug las' fall—no couch—no lil' room—nev' *no* time!"

And then she knew he was just lying. She was sure that he still had the antique in his possession. But he was going to put her through a stiff ordeal to obtain it—a bargaining contest in which the trained skill of the Oriental would be pitted against the shrewd cunning of the Yankee.

The old man shrugged placatingly. "No rug, lady; ver' sorry. No one sell in Oriental quarter—the duty, lady, so ver' high."

The lady's sniff was almost a snort.

"Duty, your grandmother! Do you think I don't know you smuggle in half the stuff you sell?"

The dark eyes widened. "I assure lady she mistake. No dealer 't all in Washington Street that—"

But her contemptuous cluck clipped protest. Her lorgnette swept the shelving, tripping upon the cornice. "There—on top; what's up there?"

"Oh, lady," smiling, "jus' lot brok'n things."

"Umph!" She studied suspiciously the hummocks of dust-blackened bundles and miscellaneous wares that peeped above the line of the cornice. Here and there, mounted upon the pile, was a broken taboret or a legless chair of inlaid walnut. Towering above all, and leaning tipsily in the embrace of a grimy wall from which the paper hung in strips that were blackened with the toll of years, was a tall lamp pedestal of

brass filigree. Of a sudden the lady's arm pointed.

"That bundle there, with something dark sticking out of it"—her voice hardened imperatively—"get it down."

The Oriental strained his timeworn eyes.

"Oh, lady," with sudden headshake, "that nothing—jus' cheap tablecovers—all damage' with water."

"Get it down!" sharply. And under her insistence a ramshackle stepladder was placed and the old man painfully struggled upward.

"This, lady?" Then, as she nodded, he gave it a jerk. It responded instantly, tumbling, dust-shrouded, to the floor, where it burst, disclosing a quantity of gaudy Armenian tablecovers, long ago mildewed and discolored.

But the wrench had been productive of other results, wholly unlooked for, unimagined. The drowsing pedestal had promptly lapsed to a reclining position, carrying with it as a mantle the overhanging sheaf of wallpaper against which it had leaned.

"Ah-ha!" It was the sort of cry one releases on discovering someone at the jam. "What do you call *that*?" pointing. "Don't see it, do you? No, of course not!"

"I—I"—he swallowed nervously—"I don't believe I see what the lady—"

"Oh, no," acidly, "you don't see that opening—of course not! Never saw it before, did you? Oh, no!"

As a matter of fact, he never had. What his rheumy eyes did see now, however, was a round hole, such as forms an entrance for stovepipes. It had been curtained—for how long even his predecessor might not have known—by the stiff, overhanging sheaf of blackened and mildewed wallpaper that the falling pedestal had rent aside. And he had had the shop for twenty years, and everything was just as it was when he had bought it from the widow of Mustapha, the Syrian, who had had it from Karo, the Egyptian, who—as legend had it—had overrun the street with his pet cats until he himself had been overrun and killed one night by the hose cart of the volunteer firemen of that day.

"You said you had no rug! Isn't that a rug?"

Truly something dark and fabriclike did fill the opening into the flue. Again the old man strained blinkingly—then shook his head, murmuring something about his eyesight.

"But not rug, lady," with a positive headshake; "it could not be rug. Jus' bunch ol' rags—it always bes' stuff opening."

He sighed, knowing it would be useless to try to make the lady understand that it was just such places that the evil *djin* appropriated as their abodes. The lady, being of the *feringhi*, and therefore of darkened understanding, would never understand this that every Persian child knew. A disdainful grunt cut short his reflections and the lady moved down upon him.

"Pull it out!" she said with resolute command. "I know it's a rug as well as you do; get it down!"

And down it came under his pull, and with it came Abou Hassan himself, clutching wildly at the ladder and breaking his fall, so that beyond a shaking, he remained unhurt. The roll from the chimney hole opened wide as it fell and brought up against the floor with an impact noiseless as the falling of a shred of down.

"Oh, what a—"

The lady's ejaculation of admiration and delight was abruptly curtailed by a rolling surge of gray dust that spread upward from where the rug struck—for rug indeed it was.

But *such* a rug! A thing flawless and perfect, a composition of matchless woof and tone—radiant as a jewel, and an unmistakable Iran. With handkerchief filtering her breath from the fine impalpable powder that struck her face, she pressed forward, peering eagerly at her prize—for hers she had settled it was to be. The floriated medallion on a background of yellow was only one of several points that proclaimed to her trained eye that she stood in the presence of that rarest treasure of the rug collector, the antique of antiques, a genuine diamond Kerman!

A sense of triumph thrilled her. She

had found it *herself*, and despite the cunning obstacles and evasions practised upon her by the dealer.

Old rags, indeed! Why, the very appearance of the rug convinced her that it had been secreted very recently! It was true that a welling fog of dust was rising from all about its margin, but the rug itself was dustless, the fabric and colors as fresh and distinct as though just from the cleaner's hands. The sacred obligations of coffee, indeed!

Forgetful of the dust, the lady sniffed indignantly at the shameless treachery of the dealer, and was forthwith possessed of a strong inclination to sneeze. She struggled against the seizure, a sneeze being something she felt was always undignified and ridiculous. It was at this instant that the old dealer, having successfully negotiated a rheumatic climb to his feet, found his head on a level with that of the stooping lady.

And just then came the sneeze! A sneeze, pent up and therefore charged with dynamic force; a sneeze that lifted her head and Juno torso to erectness and hurled them forward like the hammer of Thor. With it, an explosion like the bursting of a drumhead—a startling percussion before which the little dealer went backward like a wisp of straw. The Persian rug lay immediately behind him, and the lady inhaled again for a cry of warning as his profaning heels moved toward the silken margin. Then her eyes closed under the shock of another sneeze.

It was a duration infinitesimal, but when she looked again she felt compelled to rub her eyes and then to rub again, and not for dust alone.

There lay the antique rug, gleaming resplendent as an artist's dream of light and warmth and beauty. There, too, about its margins hovered the dust cloud, lazily drifting upward in tawny, smokelike swirls. But Abou Hassan himself was gone!

In the instant's duration of her sneeze, the little old dealer had literally vanished in the air!

The matron gasped.

The inhalation was unhappily timed

just to meet a fresh wave of dust that took her squarely in the mouth.

Forthwith rug and dealer alike lapsed in interest for the lady as she writhed agonizingly in the throes of asphyxiation.

III

HOWEVER disquieting, not to say demoralizing, it may be to the average Christian to be precipitated to earth along with a surging roll of choky, impalpable dust, it is an accident of little moment to a son of the Orient, born and bred upon the sand-sprayed fringes of the desert. A shake or two and a prayer of gratitude to Allah, and the incident was closed so far as Abou Hassan was concerned.

It was the lady's sudden, percussive sneeze that had startled and disquieted him. Before its violence he had yielded backward a tread or two, that brought his slipped feet into negotiation with something pleasantly soft and fibrous. A glance downward showed that he was standing upon the rug that the American lady's vehement persistence had unearthed.

This discovery accomplished, he stood quietly in his tracks, his shabby brown figure hanging forward in a restful pose as he awaited, with Oriental patience, the subsidence of the dust cloud that had driven his customer into a violent paroxysm of coughing and seemed fairly likely to strangle her outright.

Yet his deep-socketed eyes followed the lady's heavy and violent writhings not without concern. He was moved by the tragic certainty that in falling presently *in articulo mortis* she would inevitably encompass the destruction of a variety of fragile wares bestowed upon the low table above which she immediately hovered. He was relieved when, at the very crisis of his apprehension, she spied a small side window and plunged at it desperately.

Abou Hassan's attention came back to the rug. A rug, but what sort of a rug? He stooped lower, his timeworn eyes striving to pierce the layer of soot and dust and cobwebs at his feet. If there

existed aught of wool or pattern worth the seeing, it was effectually shrouded by that murky pall. His hand reached to the rug's margin to shake it, and then was suddenly, sharply withdrawn.

For judgment had whispered to him the shrewd suggestion that perhaps it were better not to disturb the dust-charged fabric until after the lady had bargained. It must be said, however, that this forethought of Abou Hassan's arose from no considerate apprehensions of increasing the lady's discomfort through greater pollution of the air with dust. Indeed, it might be further admitted that, except in a wholly detached, commercial way, he had no concern whatever for the lady's discomfort or demise.

No, he was moved by a suddenly acquired presentiment, amounting to a certainty, that the tragedies wrought by moth and dirt and rotting dampness during the fabric's decades of service as a plug for a chimney hole would be such as to discourage a desire for acquisition. True, through some fortunate acrobatic feat or accident it had managed to land flat and apparently entire, but—well, Abou Hassan was old in wisdom as well as years, and well he knew that animal and vegetable fiber had in time its tenacity eaten out by the corroding teeth of dampness, darkness and mold. Moreover, it was unlikely that the fabric could have had any value originally—so he reasoned—or never would it have been appropriated to such use.

It was these considerations that gave him pause as he stooped to shake the corner. Instead, he shook his head, with a covert eye for the agitated lady at the window. He doubted if now the knotted strands that lay beneath that dirt-packed mantle had little more adherence than so much leafmold. He eyed it with something like reproach. Why, in all the years that it had lurked beneath that obscuring sheaf of wallpaper, had it not in some way manifested itself to his intelligence? The old dealer sighed.

Then he brightened under a sudden gleam of hope. That was it: had not the *khanum* said "any sort of rug"? And now that a rug had been so amaz-

ingly found, why not use it as a lure for the extension of her purchases to include the walnut filigree dressing table and the jewel case? The inspiration caused him to thrill with gratitude to Allah that the *khanum* seemed to be coming out of her paroxysm.

It would be very simple. When she spoke of the rug, he would shake his head at first; then as she pressed him, he would appear to waver, and at last would finish with a smiling shrug of surrender. Had he not been a dealer once in the Grand Bazaar of Constantinople? Then would come a quick rolling of the fabric—it would have to be very deftly and carefully done—and then another rolling in a stiff, heavy paper, wrapped and rewrapped with stout cord. Ordinarily Abou Hassan did not waste paper and cord upon his customers, smilingly pleading always that he was "jus' out." It was superfluous to explain to them that such wrapping material as came to him through his imports found a market for a few cents cash with the little Armenian grocer around the corner.

And just at this point the dealer was diverted from his meditations by the pitapat of feet as a dog nosed its way to the rear. It did not appear to notice him, but ran heavily to the *khanum*, scowled at her with a how-much-longer-are-you-going-to-fool-around-in-here expression, sniffed with contemptuous estimate of the environment, and trotted out again.

Abou Hassan's dull eye followed it an instant with attention reciprocal, then turned to the *khanum*, who was approaching, having recovered to the stage where she was merely occupied in clearing a residuum of sand from her throat and olfactories. As his customer dropped exhausted upon a low taboret before the rug, he was attracted by the searching, roving inquiry of her glance—a glance disturbed and puzzled.

He bent forward solicitously. "Is there something that the lady has lost?"

The lady did not reply to the inquiry. Her face, considerably suffused from her late exertions, was turning this way and that as her eye traveled searchingly about her, probing interstices and angles

made by stock and furniture, and at last rather wildly sweeping the heights of shelving. As her gaze ranged lower, the intercepting figure of the merchant seemed to offer no obstacle. Moreover, Abou Hassan noted that, owing doubtless to the effect of the glass eyes that the *khanum* held before her vision, she appeared to be looking not at him but through and beyond. With a polite desire to be helpful, the dealer turned and twisted and stooped and peered through an entire circle, without his shuffling heels varying their pivotal axis more than an inch at the outside. He remained centered upon the rug.

"Is someth'g I help you find?" This time he raised his voice in a shrill, piping tremolo.

But the lady, having apparently scrutinized every plank in the shelving, was shaking her head over their closely glutted spaces. With some difficulty she even achieved the feat of bending her Homeric figure until she was enabled to peep under the three surrounding tables.

With a grunt she straightened. "Well, if that don't beat—"

It was not often that words failed her, but they did so now. For she was confronted by the amazing, incredible, but nevertheless indisputable fact that, in a twinkling, in one second's bat of her eyelash, the Oriental had vanished wholly from her sight. She could visualize the entire length of the narrow store, even down to the front, but it was superfluous effort to probe there. Why, it did not seem that the man could have had time to move a foot! And during all the throes of her coughing, she had never quite lost sight of the spot where lay the wondrous rug. Where could he have got to?

Again her eyes shifted upward and her puzzled frown concentrated absently upon a point immediately behind the small of Abou Hassan's back.

"Is someth'g lady see she like look at?"

The dealer's inquiry was wistful and solicitous and his hands rubbed with a quickening that evinced a slight nervousness. There was nothing immediately behind him that he could see except a pile of cheap gold and black gauzes for

which she had already expressed contempt.

She made no reply, but her glance continued to bore him like a needle.

The Oriental eyed her uncomfortably. Could it be that the *khanum*, accursed infidel that she was, had developed the evil eye? His fingers made haste to glide into his pocket and clutch and rub the onion preserved there as an infallible safeguard against just such an emergency. Hurriedly he recited to himself that portion of the Koran that delegates all Christian unbelievers to the third of the seven hells specified by the Prophet.

The *khanum* had merely been casting in her mind whether she would best display the Kerman rug to advantage as a mere floor adornment, or better pronounce its distinction by using it as the entablature of a handsome table. Then again there was a certain divan upon which its glorious pile would show like the shredded mists of a lake at sunrise.

"Now, if anybody'll just tell me where the fool got to!"

It burst from the lady's lips in an impatient mutter as she rose and glared down the length of the shop. Her foot beat impatiently. Then, with the swell of her emotions, the lady was constrained to find vent for them in an ejaculation commonly reserved for times when there was no audience but her maid and the walls of her boudoir. "Dog-gone it!" she breathed fervently.

The spontaneous brightening of Abou Hassan's brown face reflected sudden internal illumination.

"I t'ink, lady, the little dog—he go out again!"

Abou Hassan sniffed, but inwardly, and his proffer of information was smiling and honeyed in delivery. He even continued to smile agreeably when the *khanum* vouchsafed neither word nor sign to indicate that she had heard him. It did not surprise him to discover that it was the ugly dog for whom her abstraction and anxiety was being expended. Years of exile in this strange land had stifled his sensibility to the queer notions and unspeakable practices of the Western world. The intimacy of unbelievers with their dogs was,

of course, but an attribute of their general darkness; it could not be given to them to know that dogs were fit only for scavengers.

Therefore Abou Hassan's face was guilelessly smooth as he thrust his head within an inch of the lady's own and again imparted his information. This time he shouted the words in a shrill though broken treble. But with a mutter the lady shifted abruptly across to the wall and back, having possessed herself of a heavy cane sometimes resorted to by the old man when he took his walks abroad. With this she hammered violently upon the worn and polished boards. She appeared to listen; then she repeated the performance.

Abou Hassan understood. It was the *khanum's* eccentric way of calling the ugly dog.

Again she banged. "Old monkey-face!" broke from her. "Why don't he come?"

The old man shook his head to evince his sympathy. He stroked his beard thoughtfully, reflecting upon the strange names the *seringhi* gave their animals. Yet in this case it was not without fitness, he considered.

"He play'n with oth' lil' dog, maybe," he volunteered reassuringly. He sighed, partly from weariness, partly from disappointment. It was easy to see the *khanum* was not impressed with the grimy find from the chimney hole, since she did not even think it worth while alluding to.

Again she flopped to the taboret, and grumbling to herself, began idly tracing the rug's pattern with the point of the heavy cane.

Abou Hassan was puzzled, not to say embarrassed, the more so as one of the slippers he shuffled out of the way was generously cut open to give unrestrained liberty to an assertive and painful bunion. His apprehension was relieved as the lady's restless hand abruptly elevated the point of the cane a yard above the floor, but the relief was short-lived. With another glare around and a pursing of lips that evidenced a fresh spasm of impatience, the lady dabbed the point seemingly at the dealer's slipper.

The old man's anticipatory yell of agony as he lifted backward was checked in the instant amazing realization that, after all, he was wholly unscathed. He had not felt the slightest contact from the stick!

And yet it did seem to him that the little clouds of dust that the blow had aroused hovered just above the print that showed where his foot had rested. In very truth, it seemed that the dust print bore an indentation where the point had struck. And yet he knew that the stroke had fallen before his startled nerves had lifted back the slipper.

But he had long since ceased to trust the calculation of his rheumy sight. In fact, calculation of another sort struggled now with indignation as, murmuring strange protests, the old man pressed back against the tier of shelves, his deep-socketed eyes blazing surprise and remonstrance, his feet still planted upon the rug at its border.

The lady shifted and muttered again, and once more the cane swung upward. Abou Hassan conceived an impression that the *khanum's* eye was centered this time upon his bowed and superannuated knees. His arm lifted with shuddering alarm.

"Please, lady, you—you not do that!" burst from him loudly. "You please not!"

Then, with the double purpose of diverting her from a repetition of this sudden exercise of playful familiarity and bringing her back to business, he pointed downward at the rug.

"Nice carpet?" he proposed questioningly, for to Abou Hassan all floor fabrics were carpets. "Ver' prit' carpet!"

The indisputable fact that to his eyes it appeared to be nothing better than a slab of dirt and plaster in no wise daunted the Oriental. During the scores of his years of trafficking, he had met and routed Truth on many a hard fought field, and could do it again and many times more, with courage unimpaired by the passing years. And wily past-master in the art of trading, he knew the psychology of suggestion as applied to the childlike mind of the average bargainer. So with his eye upon the little hummocks

of dust and the black cobwebs that stretched between their peaks like the nets for tightrope walkers, Abou Hassan rubbed his hands rapturously and murmured:

"Ver' beaut'ful patt'n, lady—oh, ver' beaut'ful! Ver' dark—see, lady? Oh, ver' rich!"

"Rich" is the crown jewel in the vocabulary of new words acquired by the alien children that wander to our strand.

It would seem that the lady was impressed by contact with his enthusiasm. For she had hitched the taboret nearer the rug, and with parted lips was inclining forward, apparently feasting her eyes upon the pattern he described.

And she was feasting upon a pattern, but it was not that of the grimy painting visualized by the man upon the rug! So rapt was she in studying the marvel of the design, the soft wealth of tone, the smoothness of the pile—oddly free of any atom of dust or foreign particle—that she surmounted the physical difficulty of bending her Cyclopean figure at the waistline, despite the exactions of a "straight front," and dropped to the floor upon one knee. She laid the cane upon the floor, parallel with the border at the end, then marking the width with her thumb, shifted the cane to the other end. Abou Hassan lifted his feet in rapid succession, skipping rope fashion, as the cane swept, scythe-like, as it seemed to him, through his very ankles. Again the lady measured, finding a difference of not a fraction in width. The dealer smiled as she appeared pleased over the discovery. The *khanum* could not know, he argued, that a defect in an Oriental rug is really a woven tribute of worship—a prayer; that it is an intentional submission that only Allah is perfect. Only very old rugs, antiques that antedated the coming of the Prophet, were undistinguished by a possible application of this beautiful law. Such were often impiously made in perfect weave. Likewise were worthless modern rugs—therefore, silence was golden.

Abou Hassan coughed. "Would the lady like take?" he hazarded cheerfully. His old knees were growing very tired and trembled. He wished the *khanum*

would make up her mind. Then with sudden inspiration: "It go nice—so ver' nice in front dress' table. I jus' show you lady!"

Forthwith he shuffled quickly from the rug, and forgetful of the heaps of dust and unmindful for the moment of the fragility he had estimated the fabric to have, he stooped swiftly and jerked it toward the walnut inlaid dressing table.

"There!" he exclaimed triumphantly.

But the lady was not there. Suddenly and marvelously confounded by an avalanche of dust, she had lurched upward from the floor, unmindful of a strange tearing and rending sound that accompanied the movement, and again had heaved herself at the window.

But Abou Hassan's senses were dulled to her movements. With eyes dilated and concentrated, and tongue making strange motions against his lips, the old man hung frozen before the revelation of the rug that a moment before he had literally looked down upon with scorn. And this wondrous transformation had been wrought, he conceived, merely by the jerk of his hand—a jerk that had lifted from the smooth pile the mounds of dust and their attendant cobwebs and sent them winging through the air.

The Oriental's eye turned to the lady by the window. What would she say about the rug now? And, what was more, what should he say to her? It would no longer be a quibbling barter of a worthless rug with a view to effecting a sale of a dressing table. Would the *khanum* still expect it? Abou Hassan's thin lips twisted contemptuously. Not for nothing was he a Persian, and had been a vender in the Grand Bazaar. He knew, without so much as drawing an inch nearer the rug, that if he had it in the markets of Constantinople or London or Paris, he could command for it a price that would mount into thousands. And not dollars, but *pounds!*

IV

"TWENTY-FIVE minutes!" Tom Bentley spared half of one of the minutes for some reflective whistling.

A great deal can be done in twenty-five minutes. Battles have been won or lost and mighty empires and world-controlling dynasties have been established or consigned forever to oblivion in shorter time.

Yet such feats, though mighty, lose by comparison when brought into juxtaposition with the task confronting a conventionally bred young man given that interval in which to effect the intimate acquaintance—without introduction—of a young lady, also conventionally bred, with whom he is madly in love at first sight, and who doesn't know him from Father Adam.

Such a situation is indeed *impasse* unless one or the other has initiative and courage to cast conventionality into the discard. Such a lofty soul was young Mr. Bentley.

At this juncture, by happy coincidence, there was brought into line of his meditative vision the perspective of the car, which the chauffeur had backed into the shade because of the sleeping Agamemnon.

"Ha!" pronounced Mr. Bentley.

Upon the running board, under the open door, was poised a little dog. It seemed timidly awaiting the issue of a professional altercation between two members of the dog patrol.

"Eureka!" breathed the young man, and his memory—stimulated perhaps by so classical an ejaculation—reached for a name and got it: "Agamemnon, by Jove!" And without more ado, Bentley dived for the animal.

So precipitate an attack would have been disquieting, not to say startling, to any little dog, irrespective of the disadvantageous possession of a sensitive liver. As it was, the hairy little bundle made a hasty reach for the curb, missed and tumbled headlong into the blue stream of suds water trailing lazily through the gutter. The next instant Bentley had hauled it out by the neck and was swabbing the water off with a handkerchief of choicest linen.

"Just a little bath, old chap—no harm done!" he chirped soothingly. Then in some disgust, as he glimpsed the handkerchief: "Must say I think you

needed it!" His fingers rapidly wove a simple knot about the dog's neck, while he cut a wary eye at the two curs still circling in animated colloquy. "Now, Agamemnon"—here he effected a tie of the free end of the handkerchief about the iron handle of the ashcan—"hold that position—just a moment, please!" He backed slowly away, angling toward the two sidewalk disputants. These, having satisfied all requirements of the canine *code d'honneur* by exhausting their vocabulary of threat and recrimination, were preparing to rub noses in token of restored amity. It was at this moment that they were caught in the iron mill of fate, allegorically impersonated by young Mr. Bentley.

With that celerity and dispatch that had plucked for him many an honor upon the athletic field, he accurately landed upon the necks of the two outraged and startled brutes and savagely jammed their heads together.

"Sic 'em! Sic 'em!" he hissed.

Instantly they responded, and with yowls that awoke the street, focusing to the spot a howling fringe of other dogs.

"Sic 'em! Sic 'em!" hoarsely urged Bentley upon these, and they took fire with the suggestion. In about two minutes half a dozen fight-to-a-finish encounters had been arranged and were in progress.

With the melee at its height, Bentley whirled about and unslipped the loop from the neck of the little dog, now yapping its life away in a delirious madness compounded of terror and delight. With the animal locked within his arm, he turned about, treacherously assailing the tournament that he had himself promoted. Fiercely he laid about with his cane—carefully missing the dogs, but beating upon the flagging and slamming the ashcan with a menace and ardor that induced a precipitate dispersal.

"Poor little doggie!" The young man crooned it loudly, dramatically, his voice directed at the shop doorway. "Did they try to—"

He brought up sharply before the door.

"Oh—er—good afternoon!" Mr.

Bentley's straw hat lifted with a cavalier sweep. For there *she* had met him!

The young man panted smilingly. "So glad I was just in time!" And Bentley's handsome face lighted with an ingenuous smile. He glanced significantly at the dog, heroically withstanding a gooseflesh shiver as it gratefully lapped his cheek.

The girl looked at the dog, too.

"Guess in another minute they would have chewed up the poor little fellow," he explained. "Just in time, don't you know, to snatch him out of their beastly jaws!" And the young man laughed pleasantly.

She smiled—or would have, but that she bit her lip.

"Just can't *imagine* how so many dogs attacked him at once. Outrage, you know, all of 'em jumping that way on a delicate little animal like this!"

His hand stroked the damp hair tenderly, but even that brought from her no response save a slight and sudden twinkle of the matchless eyes.

"Funny thing—don't you think so?"

And this time he got her.

"*Very*—funny!" She cooed it softly, looking off over the housetops. And as she did, she laughed. As a laugh it was all right—delicious, musical as an angel's, Bentley thought—that is, if angels do ever laugh.

Still he thought her a bit unsympathetic.

"H'm!" he coughed. He firmly caught her eye and endeavored to lead it reproachfully to the dog. Then in sudden dismay he noted the soggy stain the animal's wet coat was embossing upon his waistcoat.

Was *that* what she was laughing at? Confound it, she wasn't merely unsympathetic then; she was heartless—just beautifully, cruelly heartless! By Jove, it would serve her right just to hand over the dog without another word—just with cold, hurt dignity or an expression of melting reproach, and say in a constrained tone: "I *beg* your pardon!"

But then she *might* just take the dog and walk inside.

So Bentley summoned a grin of cheerful responsiveness and stoically dis-

missed the waistcoat from further consideration.

"You see, the brutes had him down in the gutter," he explained simply; "sorry I couldn't reach him sooner." He waited invitingly, but she failed to step into the breach. "As it was, I just had to choke one big black cur to make him let go at all." Then, with inspiration: "I don't know—I don't *think* I sprained my thumb!" He studied it dubiously.

By Jove, she would *have* to come in now!

But she merely glimpsed the thumb. With lip dragging through a row of pearls, she was studying interestedly the damp wipe the drenched little dog was making in its frantic efforts to lick the young man's chin. But Bentley didn't care, for he could see she was going to speak. And if he could just keep her speaking, he cared not if the dog climbed all around his neck.

"How—how you do seem to understand dogs!"

Mr. Bentley almost blushed.

"Do you think so?" He gently smoothed the little dog's bangs. "Affectionate little animal, isn't it?"

He wanted her to notice the example established by *one* member of the family!

"It—it seems to like you." Her eyebrows lifted.

Bentley sighed. "All dogs seem to," he murmured, stroking thoughtfully. Then in a low tone: "It has meant so much to me in my lonely life," and he sighed again.

"Our little friend here"—suggestively lifting the dog between his hands—"shall I—er—place him in the tonneau?"

"Why—I don't think so," slowly.

"Oh!" Then brightening with understanding: "Then shall I just take him inside and restore him to—" He swallowed just on the brink of saying "your mother." That wouldn't do, of course, for it would betray that he had deliberately listened to the conversation between the two. Bentley had a fine sensitiveness about such things. "To—er—the lady?" he finished smoothly. She shook her head slowly. "Why, I don't *think* so," she repeated, but with the

sweetest of smiles. Then pleasantly: "It's not *our* dog, you know."

Bentley blinked. "Not your—" The words died to faintness as he swallowed. "Not *your* dog?" incredulously.

"Not ours. I"—she seemed to have difficulty in utterance—"I never saw it before."

Bentley looked at her hard—reproachfully even; then he looked at the dog, holding it off for the purpose.

"You mean to say—" Then, with something like indignation: "Whose dog is it, then?"

But he could see only the top of her hat, and it was jiggling in the most offensively significant way. The young man coughed.

"Oh!" she gasped. "Oh!"

With a final jiggle the hat lifted, revealing a face convulsed with laughter.

Mr. Bentley tried to frown with dignity, but his lips twitched with contagion. Of a sudden their eyes met, and it was like the spark that explodes the blast. Bentley's dignity collapsed with a sound resembling the percussion of a paper bag. Hastily the little dog was deposited upon the sidewalk and given a gentle but mandatory push designed to send it trotting back into a cold and inhospitable world.

Unless it is to weep together, there is nothing that so fraternizes as laughter together. Therefore, given this favorable introduction, supplemented with the advantageous possession of a quality of nerve of the temper of Harveyized steel, young Bentley's acquaintanceship resolved itself into a cinch.

"Yes, as I was saying," he smilingly enthused some five minutes later, "I felt just *sure* you were Miss Dorothy Morton. Recognized you the moment I saw you. You see, Herbert had shown me your picture at college."

Her lovely eyes widened. "You *know* Herbert?"

Bentley stiffened dramatically. "Do I know Herbert?" His short laugh was all but derisive. His eyes lifted eloquent appeal to the blue empyrean. "You might as well ask do I know my own brother—only I haven't any brother." His frank laugh showed the very ab-

surdity of the thing. "Why, Miss Morton, I'm—" The fingers, engaged in eagerly withdrawing a card from his case, paused tentatively. He laughed a little wistfully. "I wonder if you can guess who I am?"

The smiling, expectant pause awoke in her a panic, arousing desperate effort to recall the few college friends Herbert had ever mentioned.

"Why, it—er—it isn't Mr. Slithers, who conducts the Y. M. C. A. Bible class, is it?" she hazarded; but his startled, not to say alarmed, expression was answer enough. Nor could it be Herbert's roommate, Mr. Dibbs, for she recalled that he had sailed as a missionary to Zanzibar. Her little smiling shrug implied she gave it up, and her glance dropped curiously to the card he withheld.

He tendered it. "Why, Miss Morton, I'm Tom Bentley," he said, and the falling inflection showed his disappointment as well as surprise.

"Oh, ye-e-es!" She smiled vaguely over the card. It was a nice name, suited to so good-looking a young man, but she knew she had never met it before.

He seemed hurt at her lack of enthusiasm. "Why, surely"—in evident dismay—"surely you've heard him talk about *me*?"

"I—I think so," falteringly. Then, as his face fell: "Oh, yes, I'm sure I have—oh, yes!"—nodding as her face brightened. "Yes—yes—I remember now!"

"Oh, yes—Mr. Bentley!"

And she wondered why Herbert never

had mentioned him.

Bentley's face cleared. "Gee! I *thought* it funny if you didn't remember!" He seemed frankly to breathe relief. "You see, Herbert—'Herb', I call him—has talked to me for hours about 'Dorothy.' Oh, yes, indeed," as she seemed surprised, "many's the hour I've listened to his talk about home and Dorothy—always his little sister Dorothy." He emphasized it with hearty nodding, for he thought her expression suddenly startled, incredulous.

"All last term he was saying to me: 'Tom, old man, this summer you've just got to meet my sister Dorothy—just got

to!" The young man's eager eyes met hers frankly. "By Jove, Miss Morton, I wonder what old Herb will say when he learns how we *did* meet?"

She did not reply, but with slightly narrowed eyes and the tiniest ghost of a smile she looked as though she were wondering, too.

Bentley's face clouded. "Awfully rotten luck I had in not getting to see him off on his London trip. And that reminds me: I promised to send the old boy a wireless. Let's see; what boat was it he went on?"

Through her long lashes she was looking at him oddly. Then her face lighted, and she spoke with pleasant vivacity:

"Why, I don't know *what* boat, but it was the Day Line up the Hudson, you know. But then he was only going to use it as far as Albany." She eyed him with level-lidded calm. "You see, most of the way to London, Ontario, is by rail."

"Ont—" Bentley felt for his handkerchief but could not find it. Therefore he brought his hat into requisition as a fan.

"Jove," he chirped blithely, "I must write to Herb!" Then with carefully veiled apprehension: "Say, I wonder when the old boy expects to get back?"

Her tiny teeth nipped with careful deliberation at a loose thread on a gloved finger, while her eyes swept him quizzically.

"Why, in about a week, I should think—unless this meeting of the I. C. A. A. keeps him longer."

If she expected him to refresh his memory by inquiry leading to the meaning of the mystic letters, she invited disappointment. For young Bentley, whose hours at college had principally been devoted to the simple outdoor life of the athletic field, knew very well that the magical cipher stood for nothing less than "Intercollegiate Conference Athletic Association." The possession of this knowledge was just as well perhaps, inasmuch as the wordy combination, "International Christian Abstinence Association," might have struck him as cryptic and bewildering.

It was evident to Bentley that Brother Herbert, to be a delegate to a meeting of the revered Association, must be going some in athletics. His heart warned to him for his own sake.

"Dear old chap," he murmured affectionately, "what a crank he is on athletics!" His gaze shifted contemplatively and missed her quick intake of breath. "Never will forget how hard he worked to get me on the team. But the coach wouldn't have me—just wouldn't—and so—"

"Team?" Her penciled brows contracted the tiniest bit, he noticed. "You don't mean that Herbert—that *he*—"

"Mean it!" The young man blurted it with emphasis. "Indeed I do mean it—even *he* couldn't get me on!"—with a gloomy sigh. "And I *would* have liked to help uphold the college colors."

"Let's see"—her little forefinger touched her lips reflectively; "what *are* the college colors? It seems to me that Herbert told me, but I—" Her lips paused, and her beautiful eyes questioned him gravely.

"Er—what's that?" Bentley's disturbed expression was more or less sincere. "Say, you don't mean to tell me you've forgotten what our colors are!" He swallowed painfully. "Oh, you're joking now—you know you are!"

His glance pierced her with mild reproach. At the same time his hand again searched for his handkerchief and vainly.

"No, honest—I've forgotten!" Jove, how distractingly her little teeth flashed as she admitted it!

Bentley looked hurt, however. "Well then, I know *I'm* not going to tell you!"—with indignation. "Why, old Herb would never forgive me if I told him I *had* to tell you!"

"Please!"

The young man gulped heavily. It was hard to slight the first—the very first—request from her lips. But no—it wouldn't do—it was *too* risky. He craftily changed the subject. "I remember once when we were practising on the river for the 'varsity eight-oared race, and—"

"River?" Her eyes lifted innocently,

demurely. "I don't believe Herbert ever told me about the river."

"Oh, didn't he?" This then was sure ground. "Well, that river's just the finest practice course in New England—yes sir!" Here enthusiasm and loyalty broke from the leash. "I tell you, Miss Morton, it's just sticking to practice on the Charles River that's enabled our fellows to put it over Yale for three years running! Why, Yale hasn't got—"

"How odd!" She was looking upward, a little pucker in her forehead. "Herbert always said there was no practice water but an artificial lake—no, I forgot; there *was* the canal! I suppose, they *could* practice for regattas on that, couldn't they?"

Bentley failed to come up. He mouthed at her blankly, his mind boggling wildly after a university famed in regattas whose dependence at any time was a blithering canal.

"Princeton, you know," she said softly. "Herbert is at the Princeton Theological Seminary."

The Harvard man's eyes rolled. "Princeton!" He breathed it a little hoarsely. "Princeton and 'varsity regattas—oh, ye gods!" Bentley's hand struck his forehead smartly; moreover, he groaned with real suffering. Again he essayed a search for his handkerchief.

"Just can't imagine—" he murmured absently as he groped through his coat. And he laughed in genial perplexity.

"Didn't you leave it on the ashcan?"—sweetly. "See there!" The smile was honeylike, but the dig of her hat toward the sidewalk edge was just a trifle waspish. "Isn't that a handkerchief?"

From his distance Bentley studied it critically.

"Well, now, I declare"—with surprise—"that *is* a handkerchief, isn't it?"

She sniffed lightly. "And isn't it yours?"

Young Bentley inclined his head to one side.

"Well, now, do you know, I believe it is. My! How you notice things!"

She bit her lip. "Notice?"—witheringly. "Why, I noticed it all from the first—I was watching from the inside."

Bentley stared; then his blue eyes lighted.

"*Did* you? Were you doing that?"—almost tenderly. "Now, isn't that the strangest coincidence? Do you know, I was watching *you* from the inside, too! I declare now, if that—"

"Yes," she interrupted, "and you heard my aunt and me talking, and—"

"Aunt?" The young man's gasp evinced genuine surprise.

"Yes, aunt," with a little snap—"my aunt, Mrs. Pompernel."

Yet, though she could keep her lips under control now, she could not control the traitorous, twinkling dimple in her cheek. And this perfectly absurd young man just watched it with a perfectly frank admiration that was awfully embarrassing. Of course he was absolutely ridiculous the way he acted, she reflected—perfectly *crazy*; still there was something—well, something awfully nice about him somehow—so *different*. And then—and then she had so few adventures!

"And that's how you got my name!"—severely. "You *know* Herbert never told you—you *know* you don't know Herbert at all!"

Bentley fell back as from a blow.

"Oh, *there* now you're off your—I mean you're mistaken. That *is* a good joke!" He fanned lightly, laughing feebly at the absurdity of the thing. "What, not know your brother—not know old Herb Morton?"

"Perhaps you *do* know him"—her pretty neck straightened spiritedly as she looked off—"but I'm sure I don't! I never before heard of 'Herb Morton'—and what's more, I *haven't* any brother. Perhaps"—her nose tilted the slightest—"perhaps you are thinking of my cousin, Herbert Pompernel!"

Bentley's hand again mechanically sought for his handkerchief—and gave it up. The improvised fan quickened its beats. "Well, I declare!" he murmured pacifically.

And just then, for some untoward reason, the rapidly wigwagging hat slipped from his fingers, and performing the evolutions of a discus, vanished inconspicuously into the mouth of the corner

sewertrap. Bentley was not only handkerchiefless, but was now hatless and fanless as well.

There are great opportunities when heroes are revealed. Thus, in this instance, without so much as a flick of an eyelash, Tom Bentley dug for his cigarette case and opened it with a whimsical smile that requested permission to smoke.

She nodded through a choke of laughter. For the moment the young man studied her bowed figure with a shade of apprehension. But she came up all right, her hand pressed to her side, her shining eyes floating in a sea of glorious color. That was the way *he* thought of it, but she immediately proceeded to make little dabs at herself with a delightfully absurd handkerchief.

"Oh, dear!"—pantingly. "You are the funniest thing I ever saw! Oh!"

Mr. Bentley looked flattered. He pulled smilingly at his cigarette.

"But, do you know, the thing I can't understand"—he inclined upon his cane with an air of frank willingness to waive further consideration of topics upon which they were not entirely *en rapport*—"the thing that gets *me* is about that dog—*your* dog, I mean." He flicked an ash with graceful gesture. "What *did* the old"—a hasty fingersnap—"I mean, what was that your aunt meant about a dog? *Is* there a dog?"

"I'll show you." And from her lips issued a whistle. It was a whistle such as few girls can make, a whistle short but shrill and awakening, repeated thrice and blended with a summons: "Here, Aggie, Aggie—good dog, Agamemnon—*here!*"

From the depths of the car sounded a faint protesting growl, followed by the appearance in the door of the most perfectly brutal-looking bulldog the young man had ever seen. Instead of being a little dog, as he had conceived, it was of proportions that would have made it easy work to throttle a hefty cow. It yawned frankly and without reserve; then, with one long, sinister tusk of the lower jaw protruding before the upper, it studied Mr. Bentley with undissembling disapprobation. It would appear

that it was not unconservant with the fact that to that gentleman it owed credit for a broken repose.

"God! What an ugly beast!"

Bentley's ejaculation was of admiration, but evidently Agamemnon's intuitions were undeveloped. The long wipe of his red tongue directed at the speaker and the baleful glower of his redder eye suggested that he was not given to probing beneath the surface meaning of words.

"It's just his expression, you know," the girl explained. Then demurely: "Due, auntie says, to his shattered health."

"Huh!" Bentley grunted.

Her eyes twinkled. "The doctor thinks Agamemnon should be taken to a high altitude."

Bentley nodded, with clearing brow. "Great idea!" he pronounced with enthusiasm. "The top of the Metropolitan Tower, you know; and drop him so he wouldn't hit the roof below. Fine!"

Their lapse to laughter appeared to stimulate the outraged Agamemnon to activity. He dropped heavily to the sidewalk and studied Mr. Bentley's calves with what appeared to be purpose, deep, calculating and malevolent.

"He doesn't *seem* friendly," said Miss Morton dubiously, "but he makes attachments readily."

Bentley's faint laugh was mirthless.

"I don't doubt it," grimly; "in fact, I think he's making up his mind now just where he's going to attach!"

With nonchalant air he surreptitiously shifted his cane so that the solid silver head was the furthest point from his hand. He hated to start in this way with the family, but he was possessed of an idea that if Agamemnon attempted any attachments, he would of surety "get his."

Perhaps Agamemnon divined this. He stood for an instant with moody crouch of the head, his misshapen legs apparently rounded to the embrace of an invisible barrel. Then, with a saturnine lick above the tusk, that suggested the promise to abide another day, he banished Mr. Bentley from his present regard. Besides, his attention was

being claimed by a passing member of the dog patrol, a sturdy, though slovenly groomed brindle, whose friendly overtures seemed inspired by a conviction that Agamemnon was a member of his lodge. Doubtless this was an error of enthusiasm, for the cryptic and fraternal movements of tail and eye and ear seemed to win no response. Indeed, Agamemnon bore himself with an unrelaxing *hauteur* and reserve distinctly discouraging to an ardent fraternal devotee.

"He's so shy, you know," the girl explained; "at least, that's the way auntie accounts for it. Aggie's so diffident—so timid."

It was at this instant that Agamemnon, evidently to demonstrate the principle that the exception proves the rule, turned upon the brindle, and seizing him by the throat, throttled him against the flagging with skill and vigor.

This accomplished, he wiped his chops as the duelist wipes his sword, and, nosing the ground, trotted within the shop's doorway. As he passed Bentley, he bestowed upon him an upward leer of the tongue and a deprecating sniff that placed that gentleman unquestionably as *infra dig*.

The girl laughed. "It's just his abashed way. Auntie is always having to explain to neighbors how extremely nervous Agamemnon is—they *will* come in about their pets!" Then with dancing eyes: "You notice how timid he is?"

Bentley studied absently the blood dab upon the sidewalk, then his eye followed cheerfully the brindle comet that was touching only the high places afar down the street. Then his attention centered pensively upon the doorway that had absorbed the timorous one.

"Sensitive, shrinking little violet!" he murmured.

He wondered uncomfortably whether the other members of her family were just as sensitive and timid as "auntie" and Agamemnon. Then, with sudden remembrance, he whisked out his watch. Jove! The twenty-five minutes were long since gone! "And not yet engaged!" Bentley ruminated, aghast.

V

MRS. POMPERNEL studied the rug with an outward indifference that veiled an inward palpitation.

"Oh, yes, it's quite a nice rug," she said pleasantly, "quite a nice weave; and the colors are not bad at all. I *might* use it somewhere."

The mask of the Oriental's face was inscrutable. He appeared no longer interested in his customer, and in fact sat down openly and without apology upon a taboret. His attention seemed to be magnetized by a stool by the window and a long *chibouk* that lay there upon the sill. He yawned quite frankly—even audibly.

Mrs. Pompernel's heart beat faster. Unversed as she was in the ways of the Oriental trader, she nevertheless recognized that she was in the presence of a foeman worthy of all the craft and subtlety she had inherited from forbears who had skinned the Indians out of everything they possessed except their weapons to hunt with. Forthwith she proceeded to drop beside the fabric and to undertake certain tentative examinations that betrayed to the dealer in two minutes that she fully appreciated the royalty of the prize before her.

She arose somewhat excited; the hand leveling the lorgnette at the rug trembled the slightest. Nevertheless, the lady's eyebrows lifted with a brave *sang froid*.

"I don't really care, though, for Turkish rugs," she said carelessly. "They are so common, you know. Still, I might—" She wondered how much the dealer really knew.

She soon found out. The old man arose and shuffled forward, rubbing his hands through habit. His instinct of humor or even retaliation was too passive for him to think it worth while to remind the lady that only a few moments ago she was clamoring for *any* sort of rug, just so it was a rug!

"If lady will notice," he said blandly, "right here and here figures show of eagle. My eyes not good, but I—"

"Oh, yes," she answered indifferently, "I see those."

"You perhaps not know, lady, no

birds—oh, no an'mals any kind ev' on Turk'sh rug. No, lady, *nev'* see that! Turks, they *Sunna* Moham'dan—ver' strict; they no allow!" He shook his head earnestly. "But Persians, they *Shiah* Moham'dan"—he wrinkled a sort of smile; "they not so—well, they not care!"

Mrs. Pompernel nodded—but at the rug. For the instant she scarcely had the nerve to face the old man's deep set eyes. What he had said she knew already; moreover, she knew *he* knew she knew! She turned the corner over with her foot and had it in mind to make some comment upon the weave, but her tongue could not essay it. She knew that in the antique before her there were not less than one thousand knots to the square inch—all in the Senna, or Persian knot, and not in the Ghiordes, or Turkish knot. It would be as time wasting and foolish to challenge these points with one who knew as it would be for her to say that the rug did not lie straight and flat upon the floor. She speculated wildly as to what he meant to charge her for it; or *did* he mean to let her have it at any price?

The apprehension gave her a sudden cold chill. Why had he been so *very* stubborn in denying the possession of the rug? Why had he taken such extraordinary pains to conceal it? It came to her that the antique was being withheld from sale, pending the return or convenience of some more favored customer. The very thought caused her eyes to snap and the parrot nose to stiffen.

"Yes, that's a good rug," she said graciously. Then, with a keen look: "I don't blame you for keeping it concealed."

Abou Hassan's gesture of the hands was eloquent—of anything.

"I suppose it's for sale, isn't it?" She coughed nervously. This was the only real question, after all. The pride of skillful bartering, the glory of a possible victory achieved in subtle bargaining, were matters that were fast becoming secondary in the face of the alarm induced by the dealer's implacable indifference.

Abou Hassan stroked his beard. He

shrugged. "No market here, lady, for such rug. I think I sav' till I able take it Eur'pe."

So that was it! She felt relief at the intelligence that it was merely a matter of market, which was another way of saying it was a matter of price. This information clarified the problem for her and furnished wondrous reassurance. Europe, indeed! She would like to see the connoisseur in Europe, be he even prince or potentate, who would be willing to stand up against her in competition for the thing that had become her heart's desire! There were spoils already in her home that were trophies of bloodless victories in this respect, and there would be more. Moreover, in her case, there was no embarrassing challenge or inhibition on the part of husband to be feared. The reason for this was entirely aside from the simple temperamental condition that left Mr. Pompernel a sheep at home, however he might cavort as a bull or bear in Wall Street.

The fact was that the vulgarly colossal fortune left her by her father had been a bequest conditioned upon its remaining absolutely under her own management, free from the control of Mr. Pompernel, a son-in-law of unquestionable business ability, but for whose intelligence and general acumen Mr. Vanderschlottter had cherished profound contempt. Some said that this low opinion had been induced by the simple fact of Mr. Pompernel's electing to sacrifice life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in order to take anyone like Maria Vanderschlottter to wife. On the other hand, oddly enough, the old commercial king had lavished deference and esteem upon Clyde Morton, who everyone knew had no business ability whatever, and who had married the younger daughter in open defiance of the father's wishes, telling him to keep his money and be hanged, or words to that effect. Perhaps the bond here was the worshipful idolatry and care of the young husband for the delicate wife who had been the very darling of the old man's heart. And when she was gone, and in time, Morton had followed, leaving him no

one to talk to of her, the old merchant had not lingered long.

Mrs. Pompernel was not meditating upon these things. She was not given to permitting her reflections to stray into byways somber and disagreeable. It was quite enough to have to be reminded daily of the sister she had hated from implacable jealousy—reminded in the daily, hourly presence of that sister's daughter, who had been assigned to her cold care and guardianship by the one thing left whose charity and dispensation were even colder—a court of chancery.

She had walked around the rug again, gaining time in the interim to reflect, while ostensibly examining the woven angles and curves in the ends of the fabric, and which she knew were really letters in the Arabic language.

Abou Hassan, standing with hands clasped in front and tassel of his fez drooping with deceptive semblance of respect, was reflecting that, after all, no one in the world had so much money as the Americans. He had at last mastered the calculation of how many dollars he would require to transform into the necessary equivalent of piasters for him to go back to Ispahan and live the remnant of his days with the glory of a pasha.

His speculation now, if it could have been translated into the vernacular of the land of his exile, was whether the *khanum* had the price.

She cleared her throat, a proceeding for which the still dust-shadowed atmosphere gave full excuse.

"How much"—Abou Hassan's eyelids dropped before the sacred words—"how much do you think you want for it?"

A stroke of the beard as he appeared to consider. Then his hands lifted as accompaniment to a deprecating shrug.

"I tell you, lady, you been good cust'-mer mine and buy nice bill goods. And you want dressing table and *chekmeje*, too?" This last was a question, prompted by a thrifty desire to reap where he had already sown good effort.

"Oh, yes, I will take the dressing table; but now how—"

"Ver' good"—nodding. "I am goin'

let you hav' table, lady, for—oh, you may take for two hund' dollar." And Abou Hassan sighed, perhaps to think that he had had the narrow escape of letting the lady have it for just half that, and which would still have been four times the amount he would have been glad to take at any other time from a casual purchaser.

"That's all right," with restrained impatience; "but now what do you want for the rug?"

Abou Hassan shifted his hands to his stomach and exhaled another sigh, while his face seemed to contract in a spasm of pain. One would think the lady was heartlessly asking for his life's blood.

"As I say, lady, you good cust'mer, but I think I bet' take rug to Paris or Lond'. I know I get bet' price."

"Stuff!" The lady's temper rasped, spurlike, from her tongue, despite her effort at self-control. "How much do you want? Stop beating about the bush!"

The Oriental's hands pressed closer inward and the eyes set in his withered face were shut tight, seemingly to separate him from all distractions of the world while he reached a fair and just conclusion.

"Oh, lady, I not sell that rug—no, I could not, not for many thous'n dollar." He paused, seemingly actuated by no special necessity other than a desire to groan.

"Yes!" In her eagerness and anxiety Mrs. Pompernel had guided her feet a step or two nearer, and now stood *upon* the rug itself, her goodly figure poised forward in almost trembling suspense.

Abou Hassan, with eyes still closed and lips noiselessly moving—whether in prayer or calculation she could not divine—seemed in no hurry.

"Oh, lady," finally, with a headshake and another groan, "I don't know. I think I not like make price; I think I take maybe St. Peter'burg or Vien'." A sigh. "Yes, I think maybe best." And Abou Hassan opened his eyes.

"Now, look here," exclaimed Mrs. Pompernel; "to bring this thing to a point, I'll give you"—she swallowed—

"five thousand dollars. What do you say?" Her foot tapped the rug nervously.

He did not say anything. Perhaps the magnitude of the amount or its inadequacy to measure beside what he considered the proper thing had induced a condition corresponding to being stunned by the impact of a falling hod of bricks. He looked that way. He was rubbing his eyes and glaring a little wildly past Mrs. Pompernel, and then in the vicinity to his right and left. Then he turned away and seemed interested only in studying the length and breadth of his shop. Mrs. Pompernel judged that her offer had been received with contempt so profound that it was acceptable merely as an insult.

"Isn't the offer satisfactory?" she questioned sharply. "Drat the man! Why didn't he say what he wanted?"

Evidently her inquiry was but piling insult upon injury. For the little dealer, scowling and muttering strange gutturals that sounded much like goodly oaths, passed from her down through the shop nearly to the front door and slowly shuffled back again. There was no doubt that he was both agitated and angry.

Inwardly Mrs. Pompernel anathematized her folly in offering so much less than she was prepared to bid. It was the fault, she argued, of attending private auctions of rare paintings and rare porcelains and rare books and rare everything else where it wasn't considered sportsmanlike to start off as a high roller in competition for a coveted bit of spoil.

Abou Hassan paused before her, and from the black way in which he gloomed down at her feet—or it seemed her feet—it would appear that he was endeavoring to convey to her a hint to get off the rug and to take her feet from out the outraged presence of his wares. Therefore the lady grounded herself obstinately where she was, but summoned a propitiating smile and a hollow rattle of laughter.

"I didn't mean to offend you," she said; "I thought you would know I was just joking—just trying to see what you

would say. Don't you understand?" And Mrs. Pompernel essayed the best imitation of a friendly manner she was capable of when it *had* to be applied to the lower classes.

Perhaps the old man was not receptive to her overtures; perhaps the insult of the offer of five thousand dollars rankled too deep to be salved by honeyed words. She suspected as much from the trifling incident of his growling hoarsely and viciously kicking the edge of the rug immediately under her nose. The movement raised a little cloud of dust that provoked a sneeze and almost uncorked her vials of pent-up wrath. Oddly enough, she had not noticed any dust in the rug as she had stood off looking at it. Now, looking down, she saw that it was quite dirty—grimy even. But she had seen its beauty, for the reason, she understood, that she had seen the wool from a side angle. All it needed was cleaning, and this would be a process—almost a rite—that in this case could be delegated to no hands but her own.

These rambling speculations would obtrude, even as she waited for the dealer to make some sign, some concession, that would indicate that he would be not unresponsive before a better offer for his treasure. He was pulling and popping the joints of his long, brown fingers in a most offensive way, while his slippers alternated with each other in a sandy scraping upon the floor that was particularly trying to anyone with weak nerves. If he just would not kick the rug again!

"Now I'll tell you what I'm prepared to give for the rug," she said loudly—she wanted his whole attention withdrawn from his present grouch and brooding. "The offer I meant to make you—and one I know you will feel satisfied with—is ten thousand dollars. Of course, I know the rug is the most wonderful antique in the world—I *know* that, for I have seen all the great collections; but you'll never get any such price as that for it, either in Paris or London or St. Petersburg or anywhere else, and you know it just as well as I do!" She inflated with a deep drawn breath—for she needed it. "There's my offer, Mr.—I

forget your name. Come! What do you say?"

It would seem that he was not disposed to say anything. He merely batted at the rug vacuously, muttering to himself. She rather felt that this time she had overdone the thing and stupefied him by her munificence.

Of a sudden he pushed his fez back, put his hands behind him and murmured some jargon in which she could catch a familiar semblance here and there to the words, "London, Paris, St. Petersburg." Then, without looking at her, he turned his face sharply toward the front door and lifted his voice passionately in English:

"American lady" with a shrug—
"she just one big, fat fool!"

VI

As if his explosion had given him relief from congested pressure, Abou Hassan retired to the stool by the window and proceeded to fill the *chibouk* with black tobacco. It would seem that he was endeavoring to convey that negotiations were closed.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Pompernel, coming out of a series of outraged gaspings that alternated with equally copious inflations, leaving her pale and purple by turns, was at last able to gather herself for coherent speech. What she managed to say was to the point, yet covered the subject exhaustively. Moreover, she accomplished it without exhibition of gesture or excitement—without moving an inch from where she stood upon the rug.

"I'm certainly sorry," she concluded, "most sorry that I ever put my foot within your shop! But you can rest satisfied that I'm one customer who'll never darken your door again!" And with scornful uplift of her lorgnette, she stepped with dignity from the rug to the boards. "I wish you good afternoon, sir!" And she swept by with the mien of a duchess.

The five-foot length of Abou Hassan's *chibouk* clattered to the floor as he leaped to his feet with a cry.

"Why, lady," with surprise, "I beg thousan' pardon!" He shuffled after her with long strides. "Why, where you go?"

"I'm going home, sir!" frostily.

And she was going again, when her eye caught the sheen of the incomparable rug. She gulped, and her feet refused to move.

Abou Hassan was by her side now, rubbing his hands eagerly. "But you not want rug?"

Mrs. Pompernel's head tossed haughtily. "I made you an offer for your rug, sir"—with cutting precision—"and it pleased you to insult me!" Again she tried to move on, and again she could not refrain a furtive glance at the rug beyond. The result was that she only swayed.

"You make offer?" The old man's expression of amazement was as near to emotion as anything he had ever shown. "Why, lady," excitedly, "I not hear you—nev'r!" His head shook vigorously. "I tell you," he shrilled tremulously, "it like this: we talking about rug, lady, and I ask you make offer. And then I not see you any more!" He shook his head so violently that his greasy fez dropped to just above his ear. "You gone like that—oh, so quick!"

"Oh!" Mrs. Pompernel said it almost musingly, and noted with sudden, intelligent interest the dealer's filmy eye. Of course that was it! How stupid of her to have forgotten the inveterate drug addiction of these Orientals! That had been what was the matter with the man: he had suddenly lapsed into a drug intoxication, and that explained perfectly clearly how he had acted and what he had said. Mrs. Pompernel was only too eager to welcome the solution, and her ambition to possess the antique rug colored any reasonable excuse with glowing probability. It would not be the first time in history that a Vanderschlottter had stooped to conquer. She retraced her steps slowly.

"You did not seem to hear me," she said, and let it go as a general waiver. Again Abou Hassan murmured his regrets.

"And what you offer, lady?" he re-

minded, craning toward her with rubbing hands.

"Why, I offered you ten thousand dollars," smiled Mrs. Pompernel. "Of course that means cash or certified cheque. The banks are closed now, but no matter about that; I can arrange so you can get your money within the hour."

This was not unlikely, in view of the fact that she practically owned two of the banks within a half-dozen blocks of where she stood. Moreover, the quality of her will, no less than her generalship, was such that no officer or employee would for a moment venture to question or dispute it.

For a moment she thought, from the way the dealer's eyes closed, that he must be going off again. She could not know that it was the shock of proffer of an amount almost double that of his most sanguine hope. But she saw every indication of mental disturbance and was alarmed.

"Isn't the amount satisfactory?" She moistened her lips even as Abou Hassan was striving to get moisture to his tongue to frame acceptance before the mad American lady should have opportunity to change her mind. But the effort merely produced an agonized side twist of the head that Mrs. Pompernel interpreted as a pronounced negation. Evidently, too, from the Oriental's horrible scowling visage, he was in no whit pleased.

What did the man expect, she wondered—what was his idea of the value of his prize? She turned cold with thought of possible competition already active abroad; she recalled with perturbation that in Wall Street there, just beyond Old Trinity, hovering here almost above her, was the great banker connoisseur and collector who had so often forestalled her in acquisition of the rare and beautiful things of life.

"Listen!" In her eagerness she touched the old man's sleeve, without thought of the defiling contact for her immaculate glove. "I'm going to give you fifteen thousand dollars, but I want to tell you now that I think that is quite enough. Will you take it—yes or no?"

Moralists are always reminding us how easy it is to say "Yes," how hard it is to say "No." Abou Hassan found it absolutely impossible to bring out either syllable. Not only was his tongue paralyzed, but for the moment his mind groped in a fog of bewilderment that he had not experienced the like of since the day he had entered this strange new world through the gates of the old Castle Garden just below. And that was eighteen years ago!

Eighteen, or wasn't it—

"Twent' exactly!" he gasped under sudden memory. "Jus' twent' no less!" Twenty years of struggle for riches, of privation and toil; and now into his lap had been poured wealth—wealth beyond his wildest dreams in the lonely hours he had sat and smoked and waited, growing old and weak and feeble, buried under the weight of the drifting years.

Mrs. Pompernel's mighty bosom lifted under a sigh of relief.

"Well," she ejaculated, "I'm glad to know what you *do* want—certainly glad! Now, *that's* final, is it? You're perfectly satisfied with twenty thousand dollars? If you're not, I want you to say so immediately, for I tell you frankly I'm not going to stay here and dicker with you all the rest of the day!"

An instant's pause as the red fez drooped forward.

"Very good; then it's settled I buy the Persian antique for twenty thousand dollars cash." She nodded briskly. "I suppose you can close up your shop a little while and just come with me in the car over to Broadway? You'll get your money in any shape you want it."

She stooped over the glossy surface, gloating over her possession, marveling that she could ever have thought those lustrous fibers contaminated with the slightest figment of grime.

She turned to the old man, who, with hands traveling over each other with the rapidity of a gas-engine piston, was standing above tottering knees, divided in mind as to whether he should throw himself to the east and give thanks to Allah or more expediently prostrate himself at the feet of the wonderful American *khanum*.

"Some paper?" she questioned. "Have you a sheet or two of paper in which we can roll it?"

Her demand stirred Abou Hassan to life.

"Yes—jus' minute, lady, I get!" And he shuffled—tottered rather—to the bin where he kept his accumulation against the days when he sold it for a few pennies to the Armenian grocer around the corner in Rector Street.

Mrs. Pompernel, with a view of getting a better light upon her treasure before it should be enwrapped from sight, caught the corner between her fingers and dragged it to a position before the window. Yes, it *was* dirty; she noted it as she stepped upon it, stroking the soft, silky nap with her foot. Perhaps when she got it into a still brighter light it would show even more dirt. But that was nothing—absolutely nothing. She noted admiringly how the presence of the rug brought into distinction the low *sofa*, or inlaid tray table, beside it, with its treasures of delicate scent boxes, rose water bottles, *faience* pottery and other fragile, beautiful things bestowed thereon.

"Yes, lady." With another mighty pull, the dealer disengaged a sheet of brown paper. "I come right 'way." And turning about, he shuffled hurriedly toward her, catching up a bit of string upon the way.

"I get big piece, lady, so it—"

Speech left him as he halted abruptly. His head shot forward, his deep set eyes almost protruding to the surface. The long sheaf of paper he was dragging dropped from his trembling hand, and the old man all but dropped himself.

"That's right," said Mrs. Pompernel, who was looking down where her *suède* boot was tenderly stroking the silky fiber; "we want to roll it; it spoils a rug to fold it."

There was no reply, and she looked up to see what the dealer was doing. Then she started uneasily. There was every indication that the old man was going to have another attack of syncope.

Mrs. Pompernel swelled with indignation. Under her breath she relapsed for the instant into inelegant execration

such as might have come from a Vander-schlotter of a generation or two behind her.

"The doddering old drug-soaked fool!" she breathed resentfully. "I'd just like to give him a piece of my mind!"

Aloud she asked: "What's the matter?" She crisped the words at him sternly, sharply. "There's your paper," she exclaimed, pointing; "is that what you're looking for?"

Certainly he was looking for something. He batted around him searchingly, pattering to himself some gibberish she could not understand. He drew near the rug.

Mrs. Pompernel backed a little uneasily. "Do you think my salts would help you?" she called loudly. "If so, you are welcome." She proffered the tiny vial, but he made no sign.

"I suppose it just has to pass off," she reflected disgustedly. Then impatiently: "I just don't see why he couldn't have waited anyhow long enough till we had finished about the rug."

Here Abou Hassan, after glancing repeatedly from the window to the rug and from the rug to the window, shuffled slowly over to the opening.

"That's good!" Mrs. Pompernel encouraged. "Nothing like a little fresh air!" She nodded hearty approval.

It was quite evident to her that the old man was fully as dazed and irresolute in his movements as he had been before. He was looking back from the window to the rug, as though calculating the distance with his eye. Then he stood with hands behind him, his lips pursed and his head bobbing as with a slow understanding. His lips gradually shaped in a bitter smile. Then he scowled horribly.

"Don't," said Mrs. Pompernel; "don't try to remember about the rug now. It will come to you presently."

She shouted the adjuration, perhaps with some idea that by so doing she might be able to penetrate his understanding.

The old man touched the stool, then the window sill. Next he seemed to note the width of the narrow frame and shrugged with a grunt. He craned out

of the opening, seemingly searching up and sidewise. Then he lifted one rheumatic knee upon the stool and leaned out.

Mrs. Pompernel suddenly flinched a little and her lip curled in some apprehension. Involuntarily she moved backward a foot or two upon the rug, until her progress was stayed by the *sofra* and its wares. She studied the horizontal plane of Abou Hassan's shabby coat, ending in his neck and the tilted fez inclined beyond the window ledge.

"Oh," she uttered a little faintly, and blinked uneasily, noting that the breeze set strongly from the window to the rug.

"And yet, if he *could*," she ruminated candidly, "of course that would make him feel better—*so* much better!"

But the old man suddenly scrambled back to the floor. Then, muttering to himself, he shuffled over to his big sheet of packing paper and spread it on the floor beside the Persian rug. Mrs. Pompernel noted with a breath of relief this evidence that he was recovering his normal poise. But she stayed him with a gesture.

"Do you happen to have a broom or brush, Mr.—er—" she questioned. "I think it would be a good idea to get as much off the rug as we can before wrapping it up."

Abou Hassan received the suggestion in the same unresponsive way. Still muttering and grimacing, he smoothed the paper with a slap or two, then, stooping low, caught the rug at two corners, and with a growl, savagely jerked it upward.

The result was in the highest degree disastrous!

Mrs. Pompernel, with toes abruptly jerked upward to an angle of forty-five degrees, had not even time to stagger. There was just time for a startled, gasping scream, a writhing circling of arms, and then her noble bulk plunged backward and downward, a vast plummet of inert matter.

A crash of splintering and rending wood, the dissonant chime of delicate Bohemian glass incontinently smashed to ten thousand atoms, the snarl of broken porcelain, the frightened tang of

metallic things ere they were snuffed into shapeless fragments—all these things smote upon Abou Hassan in one horrible, brain crazing instant.

The next, a surging billow of dust rolled before him, half obscuring a sloping cone, that gradually resolved itself into a pair of knees, respectably habited in black silk. And then the cone dropped from sight, lost in the eclipsing fog. There was another crash, a cry, a violent squirming and agitation, before which the old man staggered back.

Then out of the dust tide rolled Mrs. Pompernel, like some Gargantuan Aphrodite born from its crested, tawny spray.

VII

"I THINK I must go see what auntie is doing," Miss Morton was saying. She moved a tentative step in an effort to pass around Mr. Bentley.

But that young gentleman, one hand still planted against the wall, stretched his cane with apparent carelessness in the opposite direction, making the *trocha* complete.

The questioning rebuke with which her eyes assailed him, and the quick, spirited uplift of her little chin, were effects spoiled somewhat by reason of the twitching of her mouth—a twitching induced by Mr. Bentley's composed and melancholy regard. How *could* anybody keep a straight face before such a—yet somehow, she did not like to call him *that*, even to himself—he seemed so awfully nice otherwise, even to his name. Besides, her infallible woman's logic of rule of thumb told her that he was certainly a gentleman or he couldn't belong to the club inscribed in the corner of his card. Of course it was all irregular, all in utter defiance of what her aunt and guardian was always harping upon as *de rigueur*, all revolutionary to the sacred canons of things established and precedent. But of course he was making himself perfectly ridiculous, and then if auntie should come!

At this point in her reflections the ridiculous young man soberly indicated with his cane the figure of Agamemnon

that had suddenly reappeared from the shop. • He stood in the doorway an instant, poking his head backward with a sniff; then he vaulted into the car and settled into the cushions with a grunt—this time behind the steering wheel. His manner subtly conveyed that his mistress was by no means ready yet to emerge.

"You see?" shrugged Mr. Bentley. "You'll *have* to stay now, you know!" Then solemnly: "How pained your dear aunt would be if anything should happen to that innocent, helpless animal! How could you think of it? How *could* you?"

And of course she just *had* to laugh. "But"—she smoothed her lips pleasantly—"you could stay and watch him, you know!"

"What! Leave him to the care of a stranger?" The young man seemed shocked. Then shrewdly, as he selected a fresh cigarette: "You *know* if you went in there your auntie would just send you back again!"

It was true. Auntie *had* asked her to stay outside and watch Agamemnon; and of course really she ought to, especially as Emile was not there.

She knew *where* Emile was! Moreover, Emile knew she knew; he had already twice poked his head out of the screen door and had promptly retired again before her reassuring nod and smile. Ah, the little mademoiselle could be relied upon! He knew she would sharply press the horn in time to enable him to be fussing about the car or in his seat by the time madame emerged.

Bentley, having settled the question of her staying to guard Agamemnon, had now, with equally masterful insistence, induced her to enter the car and settle comfortably in the nearest angle of the tonneau.

"Oh, yes, you want to be cosy now, you know, while we have a nice talk," he had argued blandly; and she had decided that it was a less exacting strain gracefully to yield than to attempt to contest with this persistent and extraordinary young man. She was glad enough that he didn't—for a wonder—suggest getting in beside her. As it was, he appeared to

be perfectly content to incline smilingly over the mudguard.

It was fortunate, she thought, that Emile's provision had placed the car back from the range of the shop's interior—yet this had its disadvantages. At any moment auntie might appear suddenly in the doorway and be confronted by the harrowing spectacle of her niece in intimate *tête-à-tête* with an unfamiliar bareheaded young man. She was surprised to find herself tingling with an adventurous speculation as to just what auntie *would* do and how *he* would meet the situation. That he would meet it, and that with aplomb and advantage, she entertained not the slightest doubt. But she would just give anything to see *what* he would do!

And it was just then that Bentley, with a swift glance at his watch and another at the swinging door across the way, prepared for a spurt against time.

"As I was saying"—Mr. Bentley's shining, earnest eyes brightened like sapphire jewels—"I somehow feel as though we have known each other just always—don't *you*?" His hand lifted quickly to check reply. "Don't speak! I know just what you are going to say; but that doesn't matter. I tell you, there are times in life when the false, conventional barriers of our artificial social system must be swept aside."

This radical sentiment had been captured by Bentley's curious ear one night as he passed a street meeting in Lafayette Place. It had appealed to his imagination, and there were times when he found much edification in working it off in quarters where it was assured of a reception of a howl of protest or a shuddering and ghastly silence. He proceeded rapidly as her lips parted:

"What I mean to say is this," emphasizing earnestly: "Here we are, you and I, and we both just feel that we have known each other for years—oh, yes, we do now!" His glance angled reproachfully. "You *know* you feel that way, just as I do!"

Bentley skillfully swept a flame to a fresh cigarette as she straightened with a deep breath.

"Why, Mr.—er—Mr.—"

"I know—I know!" The young man nodded brightly. "You are going to say that we *have* known each other!" He inhaled and projected a quick funnel of smoke, nodding. "I thought of that. Of course that's not pretending to say we ever actually met before. That's nothing!" The broad sweep of his hand seemed to wipe it from consideration at all. "Why, you don't have to meet people now to know them; it's not necessary ever to have heard of them, even. That's right; I read all about it in a Sunday newspaper—something about our wireless affinities in the psychic world, or something of that sort—you know!"

He thought it likely that she did from her suddenly heightened color. In fact, from her gasp, he had an idea that she probably knew more about it than he did. Then she burst out laughing.

"Exactly!" Bentley proceeded briskly: "The point now I want to make is this"—he discarded the cigarette and craned forward earnestly: "what you and I want to do is to begin right now and go right on just as if we had known each other for—oh, well, say for a year. I know *I* don't want to, and I know *you* don't want to use up a year getting acquainted, when we're acquainted already. Why, how many fellows of your set *feel* as intimately acquainted with you as I do right now?"

"Oh, none!" she cried chokingly. "Not one!"

"There you are!"—with cheerful finality. "And what's the use, I say, in wasting a whole year out of our lives in a lot of bally social preliminaries when we know each other so perfectly already and have such confidence in each other?"

She stiffened a little. "Oh, have we?" Her shoulders lifted slightly.

"You bet you! If you hadn't had confidence, you wouldn't have stayed here a second, talking—you would have bolted into the shop." And he added: "You would now, if you didn't have confidence! But you see, we have known each other for—"

"Just fifteen minutes! Or is it twenty?" She pressed her lips together, trying to harden her face to dig-

nity, distressfully conscious that this absurd young man was considering her with an expression of tenderness that he made no effort to conceal. She made a movement to alight, but he carelessly barred the door.

She stiffened. "Oh, please; I must—"

And then it came, like an irrepressible fountain from the mountainside—a bubbling, effervescent outburst from a well-spring of natural, inherited humor—an irresistible peal of merriment that neither her frowns, nor biting lips, nor attempted word protest could stop an instant longer.

Bentley smiled grave sympathy.

"There! You see, you didn't mean it—didn't mean it at all! Now don't let's waste any more time." He glanced toward the shop. "We've so little time, you know; and we've so much to say to each other." His fine eyes were eloquent with reproach.

Her head perked with sudden caprice.

"The idea!"—scornfully. "I—why, I don't even know who you are!"

"I know," he agreed blandly; "and that's too bad. But then that's not *our* fault, and for heaven's sake don't let's get off on a little thing like that! We can't help it—so what's the use? I dare say we know—or our folks know—a hundred people in common, but are they concerning themselves about us? Huh! I guess not! Now don't—*please* don't—let's be using precious time over silly things like that! Any minute"—a lightning glance at his watch—"any minute we're liable to be interrupted by the old—I mean, by your dear auntie. This," impressively, "is our one chance, and it may never come again." His voice dropped earnestly.

Her finger pressed her lip irresolutely. "But, Mr.—Mr.—" She lifted the card.

"Tom!"—promptly. "Call me 'Tom'! But I'm not going to call you 'Dorothy.'"

She reddened. "No, I should say—" "I'm going to call you 'Dolly.'" Mr. Bentley nodded with cheerful reassurance. "Suits you so much better, you know, and—"

He checked in sudden consternation.

"Oh! What's the matter?" For her eyes were shining with a film of tears.

"Oh—I—oh, here now!" gasped the young man brokenly. "I'm a fool and a cad! Please forgive me, Miss Morton!" His face paled under sudden dismay. "Indeed—indeed—I didn't mean to be rude—why, I wouldn't hurt you—"

He struck his hand hard against his palm and whirled away.

"Good-bye!" he muttered miserably. "I'm just a brute!"

VIII

YOUNG Bentley, breathing anathemas upon his own head, was ten feet away from the blue car, when a cry gave him pause.

"No—no! It isn't that! It's—it's because—" She choked with a sob.

The young man hesitated. Then with three strides he was back again. With frightened face, he hung above the side of the car. The girl's face was pressed into her handkerchief.

"What is it?" he breathed in anguish.

"Papa always called me that—'Dolly,' I mean—his very last whispered word when he—when he was dying. And now"—she caught her breath sharply—"when auntie's so cross to me and I—I need him so, your calling me that made me think—" The rest was just a choke as her face rocked gently in her handkerchief.

To him it was more eloquent than words, and to her his silence was eloquent, too. He waited quietly, his elbow leaning upon the side of the vehicle. The street was oddly deserted, a fact which he would have thought of with satisfaction for her sake, if he had thought of it at all. From far away down near Battery Park's confines came the softened notes of a hurdy-gurdy, rapturously grinding out the "Grizzly Bear" rag. And Agamemnon slept, or seemed to sleep.

The girl took a long, deep breath and her head lifted, the fignent of cambric dabbing at her cheeks and lashes. She smiled shyly, mistily into the young man's troubled face.

"I—I beg your pardon"—tremulously. "I don't know what's made me act so ridiculously." She laughed faintly. "I suppose because no one's ever called me 'Dolly' since papa did, and it startled me so."

"I know." His voice vibrated with feeling. He was wondering if "auntie" was really a human being. "I'm so sorry. I'll never call you 'Dolly' again—never!"

"Oh, yes!" she said impulsively. "I like it. I mean—"

"Do you—Dolly?"

Young Bentley's voice was just a little hoarse, but his blue eyes were wistful, tenderly earnest. He bent his broad shoulders over the edge of the car.

"You know I want to call you 'Dolly' always—don't you know it? And I want you to learn to love to hear me call you that as much—almost as much—as you did your father." An instant's pause and he whispered eagerly: "Say, may I—Dolly?"

And Bentley felt the thrill of his life as his brown hand dropped like a leaf upon the gloved fingers at the cushion's edge and found that they trembled and lay still a second—two, three seconds—before they were gently withdrawn. Her eyes touched his the briefest span, with the questioning timidity of a dove, then fluttered away.

"Listen!"—briskly. "I'm sure your uncle must know the governor all right, or he knows of him." He chuckled. "He'll have to if he reads the papers—just now the Democrats are camping right on dad's neck! And I'm sure mother and your aunt touch elbows a dozen times a month! That part's all right; don't you worry about that end of it a minute!" He nodded with easy confidence. "All we want to care about in the world just now is you and me! Why, Dolly," softly, "I know fellows always say it, and lie till they hurt their faces, but honest—honest injun, now—I never saw a girl I wanted to bat twice at till you rolled right up here into my life just now. Why, I wasn't any more thinking of anything happening—fact is, was just standing in that doorway, talking to the cat, you know, when all of a

sudden—say, do you know now that *was* the queerest go!" Bentley managed to pump breath here. "Had no more i-dea I was going to be engaged inside of"—his eye swept a glimpse at his watch—"inside of just about forty-five minutes than I had that I'd be flying!"

"Engaged?" Her delicious mouth shaped a naïve pout. Her eyes met his laughingly.

"That's what!" His eyes laughed back, but his head jerked with unmistakable decision. "Are you meaning to say we're not?"

She caught her breath in sudden intake. "Why—why—oh, you don't know auntie!" she gasped.

Bentley struck his hands together dramatically.

"By Jove, you're right!" His face brightened with pleased enthusiasm. "How you *do* think of everything!" He beamed upon her admiringly. He swung wide the door of the car. "Come right on," he said; "let's not lose a minute. I'm just crazy to meet auntie!"

He bestowed a surreptitious wink upon Agamemnon, who had lifted himself upon his forepaws, the better to administer a baleful scowl upon this hatless interloper. The outraged animal dropped back as from a bullet.

"Come!" laughed the young man, extending his hand.

The girl looked a little pale—even frightened. She slipped toward him hesitatingly, her outstretched hand curving timidly.

His strong clasp imprisoned it with a gentle firmness that imparted to her a strange, delightful thrill of confidence and of rest. She cleared the running board like a bird.

But before the door she hesitated again, panic-stricken under the light pressure he was applying to her arm.

"Oh, I—but what," she faltered, "what are you going to do? What—what *are* you going to say?"

Bentley's progress slowed an instant under the artistic distraction of her upturned eyes and parted lips. His smile was serene.

"Why, I don't know!" The young man's light laugh was wholly carefree.

"Now, see here, Dolly, don't you worry about that—you leave everything to me. We'll see first what turns up."

It would seem, with their entrance, something *had* turned up already—or turned over. From the rear of the shop echoed the sound of a violent crash, the harsh jangle of glass broken with violence, the angry clamor of falling brass. Simultaneous with it all, a thudding impact that jarred the floor from end to end. On top of all came a woman's loud cry and scream.

The girl flashed him a wild look. "That was auntie!" she cried, and darted through the shop.

IX

Mrs. POMPERNEL struggled pantingly to her feet.

Disheveled and dust-smeared, but otherwise uninjured, she faced the swaying figure of the little dealer, her patrician face fairly purple under her tempest of rage.

"You—you—" She could manage it no further.

"What is it, auntie? What's happened? Are you hurt?" The girl panted all three questions in breathless succession. Her eyes dilated wonderingly at the debris of the *sofra* and its wares.

At a discreet distance hovered Mr. Bentley, endeavoring with some difficulty to mold his face to an expression of grave and respectful concern.

"Did you fall, auntie?" asked the girl sympathetically.

Mrs. Pompernel's eyes blazed at her for such a question. She jerked at the single pin by which her hat now hung awry above her ear, and clutching it tightly in her hand, glared menacingly at Abou Hassan. It is possible that for the moment the daughter of the Vander-schlotters felt wild, free emotions that were the heritage from ancestry that went far back of her careful and expensive compilation for the archives of the D. A. R. Indeed, it would not be casting too far to say that for the nonce Mrs. Pompernel's nostrils dilated and the sinews of her goodly arm tingled with

the sentient thrill that must have animated the cave woman in the presence of the bear that was to be sacrificed for the evening meal.

"The man is drunk—or crazy!" she gasped. "He threw me over upon that table; and he did it deliberately!"

If he did it at all, it seemed to Bentley that it was a mighty feat, difficult to emulate at any athletic meet he had ever attended. He looked at the dealer's shriveled figure and at the lady's masterful proportions, and his hand had to brush away a smile of joy.

And then through a sputter, at first incoherent, came her explanation of what had happened. Nor can it be said that she glossed over or palliated the detestable drug habits of mankind—with emphasis upon man, and Oriental man in particular. Incidentally, there was material for a dozen club papers in her presentment of the menace of the emigration of foreigners to our shores and their insidious undermining of the righteous and impeccable ways inherited from our Colonial forefathers, etc., etc.

Only then did she consent to drop upon the taboret that her niece placed for her, and to accept the broken cup with water in it that Bentley brought from a tap in the corner. With consideration that was as delicate as it was sagacious, he refrained from mentioning that the soap with which he had washed the cup had been removed therefrom for the purpose. There were indications that the cup was its common receptacle.

Meanwhile Abou Hassan, coming out of a fright and daze that had all but bereft him of his reason, was gradually yielding his account of matters under the kindly lead of the girl's questioning.

"Stuff!" snorted Mrs. Pompernel. "You were simply intoxicated, sir! You did not give me time to get off the rug."

With the mention of the word, "rug," all eyes were turned upon it where it lay at the dealer's feet.

"Jove!" gasped Bentley. "What a pippin!"

"Oh!" breathed Dorothy, and involuntarily she caught her aunt's sleeve. "How beautiful! Oh, auntie!"

And then there were further admira-

tions, unmistakably involuntary and sincere. Mrs. Pompernel looked at the rug herself and began to feel mollified. After all, she *did* have that! She considered Abou Hassan with sudden access of self-reproach: It was *so* foolish of her ever to allow her poise to be disturbed by creatures like that; really, she had behaved quite absurdly!

Presently, getting herself in hand, she had him clear a table, and spreading the antique thereon, go over it carefully with a brush, but without permitting him to touch elbow or hand to the silken surface.

"Rummy looking place, isn't it?" whispered Bentley as he and Dorothy drifted out of range of the dust clouds aroused by the old dealer's energy. "Looks like one of George Ade's operas."

"And smells like Chinatown," she said, sniffing the odors of sandalwood and bergamot.

And then they talked of other things. So absorbed were they as to be oblivious of the impalement through Mrs. Pompernel's lorgnette.

"That—er—young man," said she, addressing the dealer, and nodding toward Bentley's uncovered head, "is he your clerk?"

Abou Hassan dropped the brush upon the rug an instant to come to her. He shook his head.

"Nex' door"—panting from his labor. "Cig'rettes—nex' door sell cig'rettes."

"Oh!" Mrs. Pompernel's brows uplifted, and the sudden access of frigidity in her glance should have withered Bentley even as the frost blights the too precocious buds of springtime. She cleared her throat, signal fashion.

"Dorothy," she called sweetly. "Will you step here, my dear?"

Dorothy came, but bringing Bentley—or, to speak with more precision, Bentley followed of his own accord.

"My dear," began Mrs. Pompernel, and had to pause, for there was the cigarette clerk. He was standing, gravely smiling—expectant. She had to wait till his glance came back from Dorothy; but when it did, she elevated her chin and let him have the full broadside of

that leveling and mandatory stare with which she had slain her hundreds and made thousands to wilt and shrivel.

But the scion of the "Cavalier Bentleys" gave no sign of wilting or shriveling. On the contrary, there shone from his clear eyes a something—she could not differentiate it—a something, though, that she had shrunk abashed before in courts abroad, and that she had felt in circles here in New York—circles which even *she* had had to plot and scheme to enter, and that upon the most insecure and tentative footing.

Then Mrs. Pompernel stiffened defiantly, angry with herself, angry with Dorothy, aghast and outraged, in fact, before the humiliating realization that her niece was introducing—actually *presenting* to her—the clerk from the shop next door!

With an expression as lifeless as congealed tallow, her glance ranged impersonally above Bentley's head, concentrating vacuously upon space. But what—what was the man saying?

"No," reiterated Bentley, "I just never dreamed that when accident brought me next door to purchase some cigarettes I was to have the happiness and privilege of meeting the mother my old friend and college chum raved to me about so much. Why, it seems as though magic were in the air!"

And Bentley tendered his card, negligently presenting it with its club hall-mark to the fore.

"Ah—oh! You know Herbert, my son?"

The derricklike heave that had lifted Mrs. Pompernel from the floor was a task insignificant beside that which strained her now in the effort to recover her *savoir-faire*.

Bentley smiled indulgently. "Know Herbert—er—Pompernel? Why, my dear Mrs. Pompernel, your son has been my nearest and dearest friend ever since we have been at the old Princeton Theological Seminary together—I was just telling your niece here, Miss Morton."

And Bentley nodded unblushingly to Dorothy, in no whit dismayed by her sudden gasp.

"Oh, in-deed!" And Mrs. Pomper-

nel's gracious smile preceded the equally gracious and more informal extension of the curving wrist behind the three fingers laid lightly for an instant under Mr. Bentley's courtly thumb.

"Ah, yes!" Bentley sighed. "I owe everything to Herbert. He saved my life once, when we were on the—er—canal." He continued hurriedly to evade a question that seemed upon her tongue's end. "But he saved more than that"—here his face contracted in a deep gravity that was more like funereal gloom—"and it was because of his precious influences that I—er—moved over into the theological department."

Over all of this Herbert's mother cooed delightedly, so much so that she almost forgot to take account of the precious rug and of the movements of the dealer.

But of a sudden it was borne to her uneasily that the man was acting queerly again. From the moment when he had turned back, after answering her question about Mr. Bentley, he had been going through a renewal of his unaccountable behavior. As before, his affection appeared to manifest itself in a search for some real or imaginary article. Just now he was upon all fours, his tasseled fez poking under the table. At the sound of her cough he straightened up.

"The brush—I thought I lay on rug on table. It ver' odd!" He shuffled toward the tier of shelves. "No mat', lady; I hav' sev'l more brush."

And producing another, he began vigorously upon the borders of the rug, brushing with careful regard to the grain of the pile. So energetically did he renew his interrupted work that almost with the first half-dozen motions there was a loosening of his cuplike fez, and it dropped gently from his head to the rug. Abou Hassan reached one hand for it absently; then he reached again, this time with concentration. Then, laying the brush carefully upon the fabric's border, he snooped about, searching the floor in the vicinity.

Mrs. Pompernel had been listening breathlessly to Bentley's modest and obviously reluctant narration of how he

had rescued Agamemnon from his plight at the very instant that he was beset by a dozen other dogs, fierce outlaws of the street. And from the way he told it, hesitatingly, it was quite evident to Mrs. Pompernel that he treated only too lightly his part in jumping into the fray with no weapons but his bare hands and cane.

"Now, dear Mrs. Pompernel"—his hand stayed her—"please, please—it deserves no thanks whatever—only too glad of the opportunity of protecting anything cherished by the mother of my dear friend!

"But kind of a joke on me, though!" Bentley's frank boyish laugh was tinged with embarrassment as he indicated his absence of head adornment. "The biggest brute just literally tore my hat to ribbons, and, I think, swallowed it—that Siberian bloodhound, wasn't it, Miss Morton? Yes, I thought so," nodding, though Dorothy had given no sign that could have been interpreted as assent, unless he chose to seize upon her widened lips and slightly dilated eyes. "Wonderful thing—perfectly amazing, in fact, the things you *do* see swallowed sometimes!" And Bentley angled his head thoughtfully.

Mrs. Pompernel murmured agreement.

"And so," finished Bentley brightly, "that is how I happened to meet—er—your niece here, and found whose dog it was, and that the mother of my best friend was just inside this shop. So I *had* to get her to let me run in and meet you." Mr. Bentley glanced at Dorothy and shifted with an air of deprecation. "I don't *know*, Mrs. Pompernel—but I'm afraid Miss Morton thought me a little—just a *little* too forward! I—I hope not; I have no excuse to plead for this brusque informality except my impulse to meet one of whom I had heard so much."

Again Mrs. Pompernel murmured and her smile was unctuous. The more gracious was she inasmuch as it did not escape her eagle eye that her niece was piqued with Mr. Bentley about something, and had turned away with a little toss of her head.

She could not know, of course, that Dorothy *had* to turn away, having no longer command of her face. The spectacle of her aunt, who had walked roughshod over humankind all her life, being twisted and "put over" by this absolutely conscienceless young man was more than she could bear without some exhibition of emotion. But Mrs. Pompernel's intuitions revealed to her at once that her son's friend was not *persona grata* to her niece, simply for the reason that he *was* her son's friend. And Herbert's mother fired accordingly.

Forthwith she proceeded to urge upon Bentley the necessity of her seeing more of him, and that without delay. "Mr. Bentley, *can't* we have you home to dinner with us this evening?" Her lorgnette indicated a deprecating waiver of his attire. "Just a home dinner, you know; I'm *so* anxious for you to meet Mr. Pompernel. Dear Herbert won't be there—you know he's not to return home for a week yet—but oh, I should *so* enjoy talking to you of Princeton and your plans for the ministry."

Mr. Bentley regretfully murmured the fact of his having to conduct a "men's meeting" at the Twenty-third Street Y. M. C. A. Perhaps the excuse was slightly inaccurate, as excuses often are, the real truth being that Mr. Bentley wanted time in which to read up on Princeton and some other things he had in mind for her.

"Then tomorrow evening?" she questioned. Then, as his glance again reverted to Miss Morton with unmistakable evidence that his hesitancy was inspired by her, Mrs. Pompernel addressed her niece:

"Dorothy, my dear," with charming inflection, "won't you help me persuade Herbert's friend to give us his evening tomorrow?" The command underlying the honeyed words was not lost upon Bentley, nor was the cold eye above the waxen smile and the slight curving movement of her fingers—a peculiarity common at times to all predatory animals of whatsoever *genera* or species.

"The old tiger cat!" breathed Herbert's friend. "If I don't hand it to *her* before I'm through!"

Miss Morton's murmur was scarcely what it should be, by her aunt's standard; in truth, she noted that the girl bit her lip and did not even look at the young man. What's more, she did not even observe outward amenities with enough care to summon to her countenance even a pretense of pleased acquiescence with her aunt's program. Truth was, the girl was battling with a wild desire to emit screams of laughter.

But her manifest indifference, not to say disinclination, in the matter of being pleasant to Herbert's charming friend grounded Mrs. Pompernel in a firm decision to see that this attitude was mended.

"So that is decided, Mr. Bentley." And Mrs. Pompernel's manner published to him the fact of the dinner's absolute finality.

Despite her intense interest in the man who was Herbert's friend and the savior of Agamemnon, Mrs. Pompernel had been annoyed not a little by a side observance of Abou Hassan, whose unhappy aberration of looking for something seemed to be growing more and more pronounced. With a smile to Bentley, invoking pardon, she rustled toward the dealer.

"It is growing late," she said. "The rug seems perfectly clean now. Roll it up and come on."

Abou Hassan got to his feet with a grunt.

"But, lady, I cannot go in street without fez!" He touched his head with his finger, and shrugged. The *khanum*, in her ignorance, could not know that this was a thing forbidden to the Faithful. He explained his loss and was obdurate.

In the general search that followed, Dorothy and Bentley managed to get a word or two apart.

"I think you're awful!" she told him. Her eyes sparkled. "Poor auntie! But you can never keep it up, for Herbert will be home in just a week. We haven't heard from him, and he *may* be back by tomorrow evening. Then what will you do? And auntie never allows me to see anyone."

Bentley grinned covertly. "Now, Dolly, keep cool," he said cheerfully, and

affected to search under a pile of embroidered cushions. "Perhaps he'll recognize me as his old college chum and fall on my neck."

She leaned toward him.

"But you *know* that you never were at Princeton; and you and Herbert never would have been intimate even if you had been. He's the most awful goody-goody and religious, while you're—"

"Tut!" hissed Bentley reproachfully and partly in warning of the approach of Mrs. Pompernel. She looked troubled.

"Mr. Bentley," she said, "would you mind seeing if you can do anything with that abominable and obstinate old man? He positively refuses to move from the shop to go with me for his money until he finds his ridiculous fez. He says he bought it at Mecca twenty-five years ago." Mrs. Pompernel was almost crying with vexation. "He is crazy, you know, and I have had *such* a time with him."

Bentley murmured indignation and sympathy.

"Let's see, now," he exclaimed, stroking his chin—"if I hadn't lost my lid—h'm—I mean hat—"

Mrs. Pompernel's willow plume waved gloomily.

"Useless!" she uttered. "I offered to send Emile with the car for any kind of hat he wanted, and you would have thought I had insulted him." Then with a breath of relief: "How fortunate that you are here, Mr. Bentley! I just happened to remember about Arabic being in the course at the seminary. Will you try what you can do with him in his native tongue?"

If Bentley's eyes batted, let it be noted that it was for but the briefest instant. But Dorothy turned her back.

"I'll be delighted!" Bentley roused with a sprightly air. "But, you know"—his head angled an admonitory warning—"the Arabic they teach us is the—er—grammatically pure form, you know, and these natives speak a sort of—um—"

"*Patois*—I know!" She knew because her private instructor in French had explained to her why the natives she

addressed upon her automobile tour through the provinces did not seem to understand a word of the classic Parisian he had taught her.

Under this happy mutual understanding of the linguistic difficulties confronting him who actually had to *use* a language, Mr. Bentley prepared to execute a few sentences in choice Arabic.

He cleared his throat, craning and stretching his neck for freer vent, as he advanced a step or two.

"Oh—er—Mr. Hassan!" lifting his finger.

The old man, red-eyed and perspiring from stooping, lifted his head inquiringly.

"*Ikker akker bikker ben; kikapoo bunkum boolaga?*" questioned Bentley with rising inflection. He advanced swiftly to the dealer's side, muttering rapidly under his breath: "Can't you just go without your fez?"

As he had expected, the Oriental's head proceeded to wag a prompt and vigorous denial. He glared at Bentley with indignation.

"You see?" The gesture and uplifted palms the young man turned to Mrs. Pompernel were eloquent of the failure of appeal even in the native tongue. The lady was impressed; she wondered if Herbert was as proficient as his friend.

And then occurred to Herbert's friend the happy suggestion that Mrs. Pompernel go and *bring* the money. She could leave Miss Morton, Bentley suggested forethoughtedly, to retain the option until her return.

"I will stay with—er—your niece," he agreed with offhand magnanimity; "I'll be right here until your return. Now *that* I think is the thing for you to do!" And there could be no mistaking Mr. Bentley's sincerity in his delivery of this opinion.

"We don't know what tricks may be evolving behind that monkey face," he warned; "the sooner you get the rug the better, I'm thinking. If you both go away he may say the thing is off, and either not sell to you at all or hold you up for days. Now, you go ahead; I don't mind staying with Miss Morton—not a bit."

Mrs. Pompernel's hesitation was being undermined.

"He *can't* have lost his fez, you know, really." Bentley pursed his lips skeptically. "You know we've looked every possible place for it; in my opinion, he's got it in his pocket."

"Oh!" Mrs. Pompernel looked startled. "You think then—"

"That it's just a plant—h'm—I mean that he's deceiving you for some purpose—has changed his mind. Did he seem keen to sell the rug?"

"Why, no; on the contrary—"

"Ex-actly!" Bentley closed one eye with a foxy wink singularly remarkable in a divinity student. "Oh, it's plain as a pikestaff to me now: the old gezebe has decided to try Europe; he'll be hitting the trail on the first steamer tomorrow morning—shouldn't be surprised if he goes aboard tonight. Yes, that's the explanation!" His expression indicated surprise that anyone could think anything else.

Mrs. Pompernel was a little pale. "But you think that if I go now and—"

Bentley's eloquent palms checked her. "It will do no good to go at all, my dear Mrs. Pompernel. You will probably find the shop door closed when you return—that is, unless, as I say, you leave someone here to hold the option. He wouldn't pay any attention to *me*, by myself, for he knows I am not a member of your family. Now, let me see: I have it—the very solution! *You* stay, my dear Mrs. Pompernel, and we can sit here on the cushions and chat, and let Miss Morton go and get the money! Now, *that's* it!" And the face of Herbert's friend positively was transfigured.

Mrs. Pompernel flushed with pleasure, the while she smiled indulgently at the young man's ingenuousness in thinking that a chit like Dorothy could execute such a business matter. She moved aside and explained to him while his face lengthened with disappointment.

"Well, of course, the only thing I mind," he imparted in a low voice that was somewhat hesitant, "is—is that your niece doesn't like me." His blue eyes dropped distressfully. "Oh, no,

she doesn't, Mrs. Pompernel—I can tell. Of course, I know I don't know how to talk to young ladies in the—er—way they like—er—because I *can't* get interested in them that way. I've always been so absorbed in my studies and—oh, you know life is *so* purposeful, Mrs. Pompernel!"

Mrs. Pompernel was affected. What a companion this was for her Herbert! She lightly pressed his cuff.

"Listen!" she said. "What Dorothy thinks is of no importance whatever—she simply has no sense! See, she is actually helping that old wretch in his pretense of looking for his cap, or whatever it is. She ought to be proud—honored—to have you talk to her! I wish you would do it—she needs it."

She glared aggressively at her niece's back. Bentley twirled his thumbs dubiously and seemed to shrink.

"I—I—of course, if you desire it, I will try. As Professor Bunken, our dear instructor in Obstetric Theology says, it is our duty to try to snatch the burning brand from out of the frivolous foam!"

Withal, he wondered if she *would* fall for the horribly mixed metaphor, which was whimsically deliberate. But Mrs. Pompernel, at her best, had no great mind for rhetorical niceties, except when they were discussed at one of her literary clubs, to be forgotten the day after.

But she *was* animated with a consuming desire—practically a panic—to get away and back again and retrieve the rug before the treachery of Abou Hassan should have whisked it forever from her sight and knowledge.

She moved to her niece and spoke a few hurried instructions. Then sharply, in response to some murmured question:

"Certainly! And no matter what Mr. Bentley wants you to listen to or do, you *do* it!"

And then Mr. Bentley attentively conveyed her to the sidewalk, and with knightly courtesy, assisted her to the tonneau.

"I'm afraid I *may* have to go to a bank uptown, but I'll be just as quick as I can," she said. "How good you are! Are you sure you won't mind? I'm

afraid this is a frightful imposition, Mr. Bentley."

Mr. Bentley's faint smile and kindly shrug seemed to say that even if he *did* mind, and even if it were an imposition, she was not to let that disturb her peace.

"But I was wondering"—his hand moved to an inside pocket, then came back hesitatingly; he smiled absently, affectionately, at Agamemnon, who was sneering at him sardonically from the cushion beside his mistress—"just wondering if you think Miss Morton would let me read to her a little manuscript I have prepared for our college paper on 'Wholesome Recreation in Our Youth'—would she, do you think?"

Mrs. Pompernel's lorgnette tapped his sleeve earnestly. "*Make* her see your view about it!"

"Oh, dear Mrs. Pompernel, if I only could! But I am so afraid I might—Oh, have I your authority?"

"Authority!" She cooed it reproachfully. "Why, I'll just be so grateful to you. I want you to promise me—it will be *such* a favor—that you will do all you can with Dorothy while I am gone."

Bentley suddenly clasped her fingers. "Oh, dear Mrs. Pompernel, I *will* do all I can while you are away. I promise you!"

She glanced at the chauffeur, who had just finished cranking up.

"One moment!" suddenly from Bentley. "What bank is it you wish to go to first?"

She told him.

"Ah! I think perhaps I can describe to your chauffeur a short cut." He looked pleasantly at Emile. "If you will just step here to the corner, so I can point."

And at the corner, behind the obscuring hood of the car, Bentley grinned sagaciously at the Frenchman. Slowly he separated a bill from his folder and displayed the corner.

"Yes, it's a fifty." The chauffeur moistened his lips as Bentley toyed with the bill carelessly. "Perhaps you noticed how it is with Miss Dorothy and me—eh?" He smiled pleasantly.

"*Mais oui, monsieur!*" Emile's face lighted sympathetically.

With deliberation, Bentley tore the bill in half.

"Mrs. Pompemel thinks she will not be gone long; but if anything *should* happen to the car to delay your return—say for an hour, or a little longer—well, the other half of this will be yours also. You *might* have an accident, you know." And Bentley's right eye went into eclipse.

Emile shrugged. His thumb and forefinger sharpened the circumflex mustache. "*C'est possible!*"

A moment later and Emile was in his place angling the car from the curb. Another last murmur and smile from the lady, a leer of diabolical malignity and understanding from Agamemnon, a whisk, a whirl, and the car was gone. Herbert's friend looked after it, grinning.

As he reëntered the shop, he found Abou Hassan affixing a greasy fez to his head.

"Ha!" Bentley's face lighted appreciatively. "Found it suddenly, eh?" He slapped the dealer soundly upon the shoulder and chuckled. "Hassan, you're a man after my own heart; you're all right!"

The old man jerked his head at the rug, which was no longer upon the table, but lying to one side upon the floor. He explained that, in moving it, the fez and two brushes had astonishingly dropped at his feet.

"It ver' strange," he murmured; "I no und'stand. These thing'—they must catch und' edge rug on table." He sighed. "I can't tell how else it come." And he stroked his beard, looking troubled.

"Don't strain yourself," the young man urged considerably, and he winked at Dorothy as he piled a hummock of cushions for her. "Your explanation's a dandy; anyhow, it will do as well as anything else, you know. Of course the things wouldn't have stood up under the thin rug like dromedary humps—of course not! But don't you be worrying over a little thing like that. *I'm* satisfied."

Aside, he imparted to Dorothy: "The old rascal! He palmed 'em up his big

sleeve, of course—all these Oriental beggars are sleight-of-hand artists." Then admiringly: "But just look at the old gezebe's face—wouldn't it fool a police judge?"

The girl's face was puckering a bit anxiously.

"Don't you think he means to let auntie have the rug?" she questioned rather wistfully. "Oh, it would be awful if he didn't; why, it would almost kill her, and—and it would make it so hard on—"

"You!" Bentley finished it between his teeth as she hesitated.

He turned on the dealer almost menacingly.

"Look here, now, Mr.—er—Hassan; it's understood, isn't it, that this young lady is remaining here to hold the trade, and that when her aunt brings the money the rug is hers—that it?" And with his back to Dorothy, he glared at the merchant threateningly.

But Abou Hassan's head bobbed ready acquiescence; the arrangement was more than satisfactory to him.

"Cert'ny. Have rug soon as bring money." He rubbed the backs of his hands and murmured relishingly: "Twent' thous'n dollar!"

"What?" Bentley gasped it incredulously, but his questioning look at Dorothy was met by a confirmatory smile, and he reflected that it was none of his affair. Besides, his glance had met something else that was rather distracting. It was the fetching picture of the pretty tailored figure perched upon the bank of cushions and the little boot just resting upon the edge of the hassock at her feet. The young man's all-embracing eye kindled at the hassock, and he was moved to sudden inspiration.

"All right, then"—to the dealer—"and you understand, do you, that Miss Morton's staying right here is to guarantee that her aunt is coming back with the money?" Then, with rather reassured carelessness: "Of course, if she should go away—well, er—" Bentley paused to puff concentratedly at a cigarette, dissembling the while a side observation of the girl. "Um—well, of course, in that case you would know that

the trade's all off. Oh, yes"—with an air of meditation, and apparently oblivious of Dorothy's alarmed gesture of protest—"I think in that case we couldn't hold you—that's understood."

Abou Hassan nodded dubious assent. "But she not go?" he demurred anxiously. And Dorothy's quick head-shake reassured him.

Having thus by strategy insured himself against apprehension of a twofold nature, Bentley proceeded to dispose himself comfortably and with grace upon the hassock, managing with seeming inadvertence to shove it an inch or two closer to the divinity hovering above. Within five short minutes, he was addressing himself to a low-voiced, rapid fire lovemaking that fairly took the girl's breath away.

Meanwhile Abou Hassan, wise through a generation of acquaintance with the devious trickery of the Western world and therefore with a canny prescience of possible accidents, bent his rheumatic bones and squatted squarely in the center of the Persian rug.

For greater comfort he removed his slipper, laying it upon the boards. And then, with soul at peace, he dozed and dreamed.

X

CONVENT bred Dorothy, her cushioned throne cunningly invested and all escape cut off, was having the time of her life.

One moment her eyes were bright with excitement and mirth; the next, they softened to a shy wonder and timidity under the spell of the deep, impassioned murmurings of the very likable young man at her feet, while in her cheeks the color came and went, flashing from flame to snow pallor and back to flame again in swift succession—and she cared not.

It was a new hour for her, a wondrous hour of which schoolmates had whispered to her in breathless confidences in the dead of night; an hour that had been theirs—some of them—and now was hers. It had come to her at last, and the frightening mystery of it all was

thrilling her to the tips of her dainty toes. Alternately she wished that he wouldn't say anything more, and wondered what he was going to say next. And all the while she was conscious of an unrecognized perspective of herself—the wonder of her conduct, the marvel that she sat there listening at all.

The truth behind it all was that pretty Dorothy, despite her eighteen years, was being submerged by the deluge that inevitably, in good time, overwhelms the girl whose formative years have been too hedged about and restricted. Now, freed for the first time from the restrictions of four close shut years of convent life, together with a between-time surveillance of her aunt that interdicted all kinds, ages and circumstances of "boys," she was as an uncaged bird that for the first time feels the quivering pinions that lift it to the great free empyrean.

But not a word could Bentley get out of her.

And this circumstance was but a needless aggravation of the increasing hunger with which he regarded her. Throughout his low murmured monologue of protestations, of soft dalliances with tender words, coaxing questionings and broken fragments of the story of his hitherto misdirected quest for the ideal of his dreams, Bentley had been not a little set back by her perplexing poise. She just sat there upon her high mound, as unresponsive as a pedestaled goddess of stone, save for her changing eyes and the twine of her slender fingers in the silken tassels beside her. The fact that her shoulder was turned toward him was a detail but indifferently balanced by the circumstance of her head being incuriously angled the other way. Lastly, the smiling drag of her nether lip through her teeth was evidence that she was secretly laughing at him.

"Confound her!" the young man reflected parenthetically but with affection. And he proceeded to press the siege.

And Dorothy, rendered conscious of this by a suddenly augmented tenderness that stirred in her a panic at her own emotions, was moved to find dives-titure and relief. A straw presented itself and she seized it.

"My goodness!" she murmured with impulsive access of surprise. "Why, where do you suppose he's gone?"

Bentley, summarily checked in a feeling intonation of some tender heartfelt introspections as to his general unworthiness—which he had hoped she would contradict—was not a little chagrined at the interruption. But he chirped an alert semblance of sympathetic interest. It being obvious that her question related to the old man, he craned his head right and left, seeking some sign of his presence. Then moved by a growing anxiety that the girl was manifesting, he went so far as to walk to the back of the shop to see if the dealer was there.

Not finding him, he moved to the front, even poking his head out of the door and peering up and down the street. But there was nothing in sight having the remotest resemblance to the dealer.

Standing there, he exclaimed to Dorothy:

"Well, don't that *beat* you?"

The crackle of his voice disturbed Abou Hassan, arousing him abruptly from a dream of Paradise and the seventy-five hours reserved for each of the Faithful. His awakening was just timed to catch the words, "*beat* you," followed by observation of Bentley striding back with contracted brow toward the young lady seated less than two yards from the margin of his rug. He noted her ejaculation as she leaped to the ground, glimpsed a spasm of alarm in her face and saw her move hurriedly toward the back of the shop. The young man following her was frowning and muttering strange things.

With suddenness, Abou Hassan roused himself to full wakefulness, being marvelously refreshed and stimulated by the prospect of an unlooked-for, un hoped-for diversion. His half-closed eyes followed the couple, their dull, tired lights fired by anticipation.

"Oh, dear!" he heard the girl utter distressfully.

Then her rapid murmur—whose purport was lost to him—was followed by some scornful protest from the man, who came back, nearer and nearer to him, his

eyes probing shadowed recesses between furniture and bric-à-brac and undoubtedly bent upon some quest.

Abou Hassan wondered.

Then revelation came. The young man abruptly paused in front of the rug and scowled vexedly at a point above and beyond the dealer's head.

"Well, it certainly is funny what's become of that old stick of mahogany!" he muttered with impatience.

Abou Hassan smiled with sudden understanding.

He pointed. "Your cane there; you drop jus' now over by wall."

Bentley gave no sign of recognition of this kindly meant information; in fact, he appeared to ignore it completely. One more sensitive than Mr. Hassan would have felt repulsed and would have subsided, abashed; but long years and devious experiences had possessed the old man of the callousness of the pachyderm. Besides, he was feeling a suddenly acquired respect for Mr. Bentley, which was naturally accompanied by a desire to help him in what he conceived to be a laudable undertaking.

Therefore, as the young man stood, irresolute, rubbing his chin, the Oriental tried again:

"Perhaps you like use my cane," he essayed in a loud whisper, getting himself to one knee. "It there by shelves—it ver' good, ver' strong cane."

Again his helpful attention met with no response. And then, on the instant, Bentley took a step forward, and with abrupt exclamation pounced upon Abou Hassan's worn and shapeless slipper that had been laid to one side upon the boards.

The action was the signal for an energetic nod from the dealer.

The Oriental vented a grunt of approval. In the old days, when one of his four wives allowed by the Koran had proved a bit recalcitrant, he had not infrequently resorted to a slipper himself, alternating it with the strap and the persuasive *bastinado*. His eyes followed Bentley with a light in them almost of affection as he moved hurriedly back to where the girl stood, his curving arm poising the slipper above his head.

"Now, will you be good?" he heard, and, "Didn't I tell you?" and he nodded approbation of the youth's directness.

Then the word "hiding" followed. The old man closed an eye for an instant and indulged in a sapient nod. He recalled the term as having been recently exchanged before his door during the wordy preliminaries of a fisty street fight.

He was roused to sudden, unwonted interest in life. In all the years of his sojourn in this barbarous country it had never been his privilege to see its men administer correction to their women. That it must be done and frequently he never doubted—else how could they live at all with such termagants? This should be something worth the seeing, he reflected, for it would have to be brutally summary to be at all effective among the women of this country. Breathing deeply and with satisfaction, the old man worked himself to his feet, and stepping cautiously from the rug, planted himself behind two massive, pedestaled lamps that towered head high in a shadowed recess. From this admirable vantage point he could see the young man as he confronted the maiden, slipper balanced in hand. At first his tones were not loud enough for Abou Hassan to sense their purport, but he judged that the American youth was charging the damsel to submit herself with wisdom to the inevitable. The Oriental contracted his wrinkled parchment face into a sardonic mask. He pricked his ears as the young man's voice lifted.

"Shucks! Don't tell *me*!" Bentley's voice was tinged with scorn. "I'm sure it was just a fool idea that if you chucked it and went home the rug deal would be all off; that's it—oh, I know!"

The merchant paled a little under his swarthy skin. So that was what she had been up to! This girl-woman with the milky, baby face had smiled deceitful assurance of her purpose of remaining as hostage for his twenty thousand dollars, and then, while he slept, had sought to slip away to her home. His cavernous eyes gleamed balefully at the unconscious Dorothy, and his quivering lips whispered a fervent Oriental *maranatha*

upon all the treacherous sex of woman-kind and American womankind in particular.

Again Bentley's clear, penetrating tenor rose above the murmured colloquy.

"Oh, I know! It's just like *you* to try to find some innocent explanation or excuse, but I tell you it just looks to me like a clumsy attempt at a shabby trick—that's what! And I don't like it!" The young man was manifestly indignant, and Abou Hassan's heart warmed to him. He registered a vow that if chance befell he would show himself not ungrateful. Bentley strode ten feet, muttering to himself, then doubled back again, pausing before the young lady.

"I tell you what," he ejaculated sharply; "it just makes me so mad, I'd like to wring—" He struck his foot down. "No, that would be too easy! What I want is a chance to get in a good, sudden kick—that's all!"

Abou Hassan's dull eye brightened and his tongue gently laved his shriveled lips. He waited unwinkingly, expectantly.

"Oh, no!" A little protesting gasp from the girl. "You mustn't—you wouldn't do such a thing!" Then with gentler remonstrance: "Even if you are right, what does it matter? He's nothing but an old man!"

The listener's face contracted in a way that would have startled the speaker, could she have seen. Something hissed from his throat—subdued, repressed, but like the spitting venom of a cat. But perhaps Allah would be good to him and give it into his hand to work this woman evil yet—who could tell? He gloomed at her malevolently.

Then the sound of his own name caused him to stiffen alertly. There came to him one clear sentence from the maiden:

"I'm going to call him!" And she did. "Call him!" The young man almost hooted it. "Do you think for a minute he'll come?"

Abou Hassan's grunt of indignation at the very suggestion of his interference was so involuntary and charged with feeling that it swelled through the shop

like the sonorous blast of a trombone. Both young people jumped and whirled simultaneously. Dorothy screamed faintly.

One instant Bentley stared in the direction indicated by her pointing finger; another, and he had hauled the startled and limp old man into the open. Abou Hassan had a bewildered sense of stormy questionings, and the hand that hung upon his collar and shook it was none too gentle. But he was without resentment.

On the contrary, the Oriental was prostrated to the dust with shame. According to Eastern standards, he felt convicted of an affront—an impertinence beyond the pale of pardon in the relation of man to man, an intrusion that was an outrageous violation of the amenities as practised in the Orient.

Therefore he had no blame for the youth for his righteous indignation over what was distinctly an untimely interruption of his exercise of a privilege that was private and personal to a degree of sacredness.

"What have you to say for yourself?" the young man questioned.

"And where have you been?"—from Dorothy. "And didn't you hear me calling you?"

About Hassan's eyes dropped humbly. His attitude was noncommittal but withal respectful. His eyes beckoned the young man aside.

"I slept," he said simply; "and when I waked"—his glance met Bentley's full—"you were engaged with the maiden."

"Eh?" The sternness of the young man's face relaxed a little as his mouth hung open under the impulse of sheer surprise. There was such an odd expression in the leather face—a suggestion as of intimate understanding between them. Abou Hassan nodded gravely, and the slow turn of his head and eyes to the slipper lying discarded upon the boards held a significance lost upon Bentley.

"You ver' busy with her," continued the old man's lowered tone, "an' I und'-stand." The ivory balls streaked with crimson fires blinked at him humbly,

wistful for sign of pardon. "I know how it is with women—I know you not like have anybody 'roun' such time, so I keep away. I ver' sorry—"

"Well, I'll be hanged!" Bentley's ejaculation was charged with feeling. "Well, upon my—" He fairly gulped as, under the impulse of sudden, swift remorse, he caught Abou Hassan's tawny fingers in his hand and wrung them with an iron grip.

"By Jove, you're a gentleman, Mr. Hassan!" enthused the American in a whispered aside as he drew the old man farther still from Dorothy. "So you understood? By thunder, you're a brick, that's all, and I'm just *ever* so much obliged!" His hand rested upon the shoulder of the gratified dealer as he smiled down at him with friendly regard.

But Abou Hassan shrugged away the apology. His soul basked in the peace of restored self-respect and all was well. He even tried, too, to shrug away the crisp twenty-dollar bill that was pushed into his palm.

Bentley looked back a moment at Dorothy, who was busying herself with some drawnwork disposed upon a table. Then he studied the dealer thoughtfully.

"See here!" he said with an air of sudden resolution. "I wonder if you would mind fading away again for another half-hour—would you?" Again his hand fell upon the old man's shoulder, gently inciting a progress toward the front door. "I don't mind telling you I've got to put in some hard work here in the next few minutes, and my only chance is to bring her"—Bentley coughed and came as near to blushing as it was temperamentally possible for him to do—"um—the young lady, you know—to bring her to terms before the old—I mean, before her aunt gets back. You understand, don't you?"

There could be no doubt about it—Abou Hassan understood.

"I go for half-hour—yes." Then with latent tradesman's caution: "Maybe you min' shop jus' little; you not too busy—eh?"

"Yes—yes!" One of the young man's arms waved impatient assent while with

the other he urged the merchant forward.

But the Oriental still hung in the wind. He stroked his beard, eyeing wistfully the antique rug.

"Mustn't let her get 'way from you!" anxiously.

Bentley patted him gratefully. "Thanks!" he said, and smiled at the old man's interest. "Don't you worry; I'm not going to take any chances, Mr. Hassan." His fine eyes twinkled. "But you are right; I guess I'd better go right after her and cinch her while I've got the chance!"

About Hassan's slow blood quickened and his breath sounded through his nostrils with a sigh. For a moment he was tempted to withdraw his consent to absent himself a while, feeling that the sacrifice was too much. Then quickly asserted itself the sense of his promise, and like a true Oriental he had the grace to feel ashamed. Besides, if the maiden should appeal to him, it might prove embarrassing—the elderly *khanum* might hold him somehow responsible. There was the impending trade—and the twenty thousand dollars that were not yet in hand!

"All right, then—I shall look for you back in about half an hour," Bentley urged smoothly. "But here—here! You mustn't go on the street without your slipper." He hastened to retrieve it, tendering it with a grin.

About Hassan received it reluctantly, a question in his eyes as he fingered the generous sole, glancing from Bentley back to Dorothy and then to the slipper again. Suddenly his face cleared, and with a grunt he slipped his foot into the leather and shuffled hurriedly to the wall and back. In his hand was the young man's cane, which he tendered with a subtle leer.

"Why, thank you!" Bentley nodded smiling acknowledgment for what he conceived to be the Oriental's ceremonial return of his small courtesy about the slipper. At the same time, he wished heartily that the old mummy would go.

But About Hassan was not through. He hung back hesitatingly, stroking his beard thoughtfully as he eyed Bentley's

light cane. Then with another grunt and mutter he faced about and toddled back, lifting his own heavy cane from where it inclined against the shelving behind the stooping, interested girl. Happy indeed was it for her nerves that she did not turn to intercept the burning, malignant exultation of the glance that swept her back!

Gravely he extended the stick to Bentley.

"It ver' strong—not break," he imparted solemnly; "it bet' than yours—ver' much bet'. You take—use!"

Again he was thanked—this time more warmly, for Bentley was touched. What a queer, sympathetic, kindly-impulsed old skate he was!

"And I *will* use it, Mr. Hassan—I promise you," was his hearty assurance as the old man carefully lowered his foot to the sidewalk. "I'll use it a while every day for *your* sake."

About Hassan's red tongue showed an instant as he licked his lips. His bowed figure, as he moved away, had the semblance of a man who was hugging his arms with joy. So Tom Bentley thought as he looked after him.

"Just loves his fellow men," he mused, shaking his head; "the real, original old About Ben what's-his-name, by jiny!" He balanced the clumsy stick, while a kindly twist shaped about his mouth. The thing was heavy and hard as iron, but the young man studied its homely outlines with respect. "Um—heart simple and innocent as a little child's!" he murmured, and went within.

Five minutes more, and he had forgotten both stick and About Hassan, for he had lured Dorothy back to her throne of cushions. But when she had perched herself thereon, it was to experience the shock of finding young Bentley's good-looking head beside her own, his strong chin uptilted, his blue eyes challenging her defiantly as he smilingly hugged his knee. Evident it was that no longer was he content to sit as subject at her feet; she read purpose in his face to reign beside her, ambition even to pursue his usurpation farther, and perchance with conquering arms—Dorothy dared not think further.

Dorothy's tongue ran faster, but it could not keep up with her heart, which was going like the piston of a motor boat. Her heart ran faster, till it almost ran away.

But she did not run away herself.

Perhaps it was because Dolly's blood was of soldier stock and she scorned the safety that must be procured by flight. Or perhaps it was just because the seat was comfortable—the more so because of the soft-fibered fabric that draped it end to end. For across the pile upon which they sat Bentley's ministering hands had spread the silken folds of the antique Persian rug.

"Dolly!" he whispered.

Dolly tossed her little head and smiled whimsically off. Her voice lifted desperately, trying to find the thread of her broken sentence. But it dropped and stammered falteringly, like the bird that strives to rise again and finds a broken wing.

"Dolly!"

"Please!" said Dolly—but faintly.

XI

"Oh, dear!" said Dorothy presently.

"What is it?" Bentley asked tenderly.

"It's auntie," dismally; "I was just wondering what she—"

"Now you just leave auntie to me!"

Bentley spoke with assurance and deliberation. "I'm not worrying *that* about auntie!" "That" was a percussive finger snap with his unoccupied hand.

He proceeded easily: "I'm going to have auntie eating out of my hand in a week. You just sit tight and look on!"

But Dorothy's face did not clear, and her fingers twisted nervously.

"And then there—there's Herbert!"

Bentley grinned. "My dear old college chum!" He tremoloed it feelingly. "What's our cousin Herbert got to do with it?"

"Nothing; only he—" She hesitated, stealing a glance at him that was shy and a little frightened. "Only he—that is, we"—she caught her breath—"we're engaged."

The young man stared—then whistled. "Oh, is *that* all?"

"No," dolefully; "we—we're to be married in one month!"

Bentley took a long breath.

"One month!"—with satisfaction. "Thank the gods I found you in time! Whew, what a shave!" He wiped his brow with a priceless figment of lace he had appropriated for use as a handkerchief. "Luck, I call it—just pure luck!" He grew oddly thoughtful.

"Tell me all about it. I know there's been some hocus-pocus!"

It would seem there had been. It was apparent from her account that a long continued bullying upon the subject by the masterful Mrs. Pompemel had at length paralyzed every fiber of the girl's resistance. She had succumbed for sheer relief.

"And she—she said papa would have liked it; she said he *told* her so the day before he—" Speech faltered and Dorothy sobbed.

Above the head that he drew to his shoulder the eyes of the heir to the Bentley millions blazed with sapphire fires, and his face whitened to ivory pallor. It was a racial trait, accompanying obsession for the moment by inarticulate, deadly rage.

"Of course, Dolly—of course you should know—she lied!" He went on, despite her shocked ejaculation: "Do you think your father—who loved you—would have taken such a chance with your happiness? Not on your life! Then earnestly: "You knew your father—I didn't; but tell me—was it *like* him, Dolly?"

An instant, then a muffled "No-o," out of his shoulder and with it a vigorous head wobble.

Bentley grunted contemptuously.

"Then you're a silly girl—that's all!" This softly—the more softly in that he breathed it into her hair. "I think you just ought to be ashamed of yourself! The idea of letting an old schemer like your aunt put it over you like that!"

Dorothy seemed to be feeling better. She straightened gently, snuffled through a wan smile at him that yet held a certain shy wonderment, and flew across to

Fatima's mirror. Here she busied herself with sundry mysterious dabs at her face and hair.

"I look like a perfect fright!"

This with tragic intonation, as if ten hundred thousand girls had not said exactly the same thing under exactly the same conditions to the same number of young men. And as if Bentley was not due to voice the usual response! *You* know what it was! If you did not, you would not be reading a love story.

Then back again she perched beside him.

Meanwhile, within his head had been pricking uneasy speculation. He seized the nettle boldly:

"Has Herbert ever kissed you?"

Dorothy reddened. "He kept wanting to," hesitatingly; "so finally one night I just—" She balked, seemingly abashed, then clicked her teeth. "I just slapped him, that's all! And hard! And he's never tried it since."

"If he ever does again, tell me and I'll kill him," said Bentley cheerfully. "And the ring—didn't he give you a ring?"

"No; he—I'll tell you how it was. You see, Herbert never has any money, because he says it's a sin to use money yourself when they need it so much more in China or Africa. So he just sends all his allowance to missionary friends and is always coming to auntie for more. So auntie gave him a cheque with which to get a ring."

Bentley sniffed. "So he is going to get one! Well now, darling, let me tell you, whenever he—"

But Dorothy's head was shaking vigorously.

"He isn't, though! You see, it's this way: Herbert asked me if I didn't think engagement rings were foolish vanities. He said poor, benighted savages bedecked their women with rings. 'Why for the price of a bauble like that,' he said, 'I can support ten missionaries for a year at thirteen cents a day!' And he took a pencil and showed me. He just groaned and went on so about it that I told him I didn't care—and I didn't. But auntie cried over it. She was so touched and overcome about it, she said, and it made her so proud of Herbert.

She made the cheque a thousand, so he could get *twenty* missionaries; and she talked to me all next day about how humbled and thankful I ought to be that I had the love of such a man."

Just then a diversion came. A shadow darkened the doorway, and Abou Hassan shuffled across the threshold and moved toward them.

The loose slippers dragged noisily along the worn boards, the tasseled fez above the stooping brown figure nodding like a spiral spring. He paused before the spot where the rug had lain, then gave a roving glance that terminated at the pile of cushions where the young people sat above the spread of the precious fabric.

"You see, we're holding down the rug all right," Bentley observed tentatively; and Dorothy smiled greeting. But Abou Hassan vouchsafed no response, no recognition of their presence by even so much as the flicker of an eyelash. He moved on with a grunt.

The young man's thumb jerked after him.

"Pretending not to notice us," he noted in a lowered voice. "I want to tell you that that old curmudgeon is just the most delicately considerate thing I ever saw!" In proof of it he told of the merchant's withdrawal in order that they might speak together alone.

"I just think he's taken the greatest fancy to you," he explained it to Dorothy. "Saw him looking back at you all the time we were talking."

"He's just an old dear!" the girl murmured.

Sudden inspiration fired Bentley. "I'll tell you what, I never will forget this place—will you? Let's invite old what's-his-name to the wedding—shall we, angel?"

"Which wed— Oh!" The angel's eyes widened in sudden panic. "Don't! He's coming back."

He was, his working jaw mumbling strange gutturals—the froth of lugubrious reflections upon the indubitable fact that, after all, the damsel must have escaped from the custody of the young man. He further fathomed that the youth had fled after her to lay her by the

heels. That her flight had been sudden enough to take him unawares was evidenced by the presence of the maiden's hat, a monstrous and unthinkable thing, pierced with murderous-looking, needle-like poniards of deadly steel.

Abou Hassan regarded dubiously the two canes that had been left behind, disposed at random upon the floor; these showed no sign of mark or fracture that would honorably avouch the zeal with which the youth had striven with the maid. The old man sighed regretfully, seared by that touch of sadness that comes to all of us for joys that touch our horizon only to pass on, missing the crossing of our way. Then he brightened. There was at least left for him the compensation of witnessing the youth's triumphant return.

With a grunt he turned and shuffled rapidly toward the front. Outside, upon the sidewalk, would he wait. Anticipation lent a smile to his withered face—an expression that seemed benignant to the eyes of the young couple upon the rug as he passed them again, his eyes fixed straight ahead, the skirt of his faded coat seeming to brush their knees.

With his passing from sight, Dorothy turned shining eyes upon Bentley.

"Yes," he commented feelingly, "I've seen a few of what we call gentlemen in my day, but if ever I saw anything whiter than that old rusty mummy—search *me!*"

"I just love him!" cooed Dorothy.

There was a sudden rhythmic whirr outside, and a taxicab halted within their view. A voice was heard addressing the dealer.

"It's auntie!" said Dorothy breathlessly.

XII

FROM outside drifted the sound of Mrs. Pompernel's voice, narrating in plaintive numbers an epic of disaster. It would seem there had been an accident to the car.

Stimulated by her urgency to greater hurry, the zealous Emile had skidded around a corner on the ever treacherous asphalt, with resultant collision be-

tween a rear wheel and an implacable and sullen pillar of the elevated railway. There had been all of the usual physical impressions attendant upon a broken axle, and having picked herself up from the bottom of the car, Mrs. Pompernel had dismounted in a panic of haste. So also had Agamemnon.

In truth, it seemed that the intelligent animal, in his instant grasp of the situation, had gone first, yet lingered near, partly under the running board. Therefore his mistress, in precipitately depositing her two hundred pounds upon terra firma, had a not unpleasing, semi-elastic impression of grounding the sharp perimeter of her French heel into the pillow-like depths of a tightly blown air cushion, which stimulated her to step again—but too quickly—with the result that she had sprained her ankle.

At this point the lady paused for a groaning breath. The intermission was punctuated by another voice, murmuring sympathy and something about "that careless Frenchman."

"Mr. Pompernel!" The interruption spit the air like a discharge of small fire-crackers. "Will you please not break in upon me when I am speaking?"

Dorothy, one hatpin between her teeth, wriggled the other into place with one of her uplifted arms and giggled under difficulties.

"It's Uncle Jasper," she mumbled. "Auntie must have picked him up at the office. Poor thing, he's always—"

"And as for Emile"—Mrs. Pompernel was pursuing her rebuke—"I never knew him to have an accident before—never!"

The young man listening inside rolled his tongue into his cheek an instant and smiled vaguely.

"But I have the money for you, Mr. Hassan!" The eager and honeyed graciousness of the lady's speech was marred by the climax of an ejaculation of pain and a peremptory admonition to Mr. Pompernel not to take up the entire cab with his feet. "And, oh dear, I don't know how I'm ever going to get out!"

Within the corner of the shop inside there was hurried acceleration in one of those heart-to-heart dramas of parting of

the kind commonly attending departure to the far-off wars or the electric chair. Of a sudden Bentley started, hearing his name.

"I'm just sure I've worn out his patience," she was saying.

Here a croaking murmur from the dealer was interrupted sharply, incredulously. "Gone away? Impossible!"

Abou Hassan's shriller insistence seemed to have in it a note of personal feeling.

"Nonsense, Mr. Hassan! I know my niece would not *dare*! They probably went for a walk. But I *would* like to know, Mr. Pompernel"—with sudden quick asperity—"whether you are going to assist me out or not! *Oh!*" A hissing intake through her teeth here advertised a vital stab of pain.

"I tell you, lady, you bes' let me bring rug out." Abou Hassan was fired by sudden apprehension of the lady precipitating a spell of fainting or worse, and thereby hazarding the completion of their business transaction. "I ver' glad to. You bes' not try come inside."

Within, Bentley whispered remorsefully:

"Come on; we'll just *have* to show up—it's not fair to let the poor old boy go on bluffing this way. Think of his standing there and lying his face off just to let us have a few minutes longer!"

And out they walked with such promptness that they were not observed until they stood beside the taxi. A small gentleman, with gray mutton chops and an extended baldness that even the top hat of rather large block failed to subdue entirely, was obstructing the door of the cab in the effort to proffer assistance to the Homeric elbow that hovered just within. Behind his back bobbed the tasseled fez of the old merchant, his genuflections synchronous with the hard rubbing he was inflicting upon the backs of his hands.

"Mr. Pompernel, *will* you be so kind as to let my arm alone and stop trying to pull me out upon the sidewalk? No, I've no intention of getting out!" Then with gentle plaintiveness: "Thank *you*, though, Mr. Hassan; and if you don't

mind bringing the rug out here, I believe that—"

The complaisant merchant, turning about, confronted Bentley. He was startled into a grunt of satisfaction. His eyes opened, blinking cunning inquiry at the American youth as he sidled toward the doorstep. Bentley, responsive to the spark of sympathy, strode to his shoulder, dropping a stealthy whisper: "Well, I did it, Mr. Hassan"—he chuckled happily—"while you were gone; and I'm just ever so much obliged to you!"

Abou Hassan's rapid nod seemed to waive obligation. "You have plenty time?" solicitously.

"Oh, plenty. Hurried, you know, because I was afraid"—he tumbled into the old man's ear—"afraid her aunt might come in on me—you understand! Had to go at it so sudden, knocked her completely over at first, but she came up all right!"

Abou Hassan's toothless gums showed an instant, then his breath exhaled in a subdued cackle, attesting to the young man his pure, unselfish joy in his conquest. Then he crossed the threshold and was lost to sight within.

Meanwhile Mrs. Pompernel, busied with an opportune chance to reprimand her niece for "not speaking to your uncle," was happily oblivious of those traces of disturbance that had interested the keen eyes of the Oriental.

"But, auntie, I did speak to uncle; but he was asking you about Mr. Bentley, and so he didn't hear me."

"Courtesy," broke in the lady—"courtesy in our everyday family relations is something that demands only a simple effort and costs nothing!" Then with a snap: "Mr. Pompernel, *may* I ask you again not to stand like a fool in the door? I can't see Dorothy." She faced the girl again with a purr. "I do hope, my dear, you were pleasant to Mr. Bentley. Were you?"

"I—I don't know," faltered Dorothy, looking away.

"Um!" Mrs. Pompernel's study of her was tinged with suspicion. "I don't believe you were." Her mouth hardened. "Will you tell me, Dorothy, why

it is you have chosen to take a dislike to Herbert's friend?"

Here Herbert's friend, himself, leaving Abou Hassan, stepped quickly to the running board.

"Pardon me, Mrs. Pompernel"—his manner was nicely balanced between graceful urbanity and a poise gently deferential—"I just took the liberty of stopping your dealer to caution him as to the proper way of rolling the rug. I was so afraid he would fold it." Then with an exclamation: "Oh, dear Mrs. Pompernel, what is it? What has happened? Are you hurt?" He clasped her two extended fingers with tender consideration.

Then Mrs. Pompernel poured forth the narration of her misadventure. The obvious concern of the young man as she unfolded the details, evidenced by his shocked ejaculations, sympathetic murmurs and distressed contraction of countenance, was balm to the spirit if not the flesh.

"And only *think*," said Mr. Bentley, "the last word I had with your chauffeur was something or other about accidents. Somehow I just had a *feeling* Mrs. Pompernel would have an accident!"—this last addressed to the strange gentleman who had not been introduced.

Mrs. Pompernel belatedly remedied the omission. She did it with an air of detached interest that left the conclusion that Mr. Pompernel's connection with the problem of life was a thing merely collateral and of little importance.

"Bentley! Bentley!" Mr. Pompernel repeated the name with the heavy pomposity often visible in subdued masculinity. "Ha! Any relation of Senator Bentley? You remember, my dear"—to his wife—"I was reading to you his speech showing there was—er—no real demand on the part of women for the suffrage. H'm!"

Mrs. Pompernel's beetling brows beetled blacker, and Bentley felt a frigid shiver through his vertebrae.

"Bentley!" she faltered. "That's true—I had not thought of the name." Then with icy neutrality: "But I hardly

think Mr. Bentley here *could* be related!"

"Yes, Mrs. Pompernel"—the young man dropped his eyes and looked distressed—"I am related—but it is very distant. Our—er—branch does not recognize the connection." He looked at her with something of mild reproach.

"Forgive me, Mr. Bentley!" cooed the lady. "I might have known!"

"Glad to know it, sir—glad to know it!" Mr. Pompernel bobbed affirmation of the restoration to confidence. "The question was natural upon my part, as Senator Bentley has a son at college, too—at Harvard—a youth thoroughly spoiled by indulgence, I understand, and allowed unlimited money. A friend told me that this young man narrowly escaped expulsion before his graduation during the past term. His spectacular and prodigal expenditure for entertainments was bringing the college into dis—"

"Dorothy, my dear, *what* is your uncle talking about?" Mrs. Pompernel addressed the question mildly but with distinctness. Her husband blinked, coughed and rubbed his glasses under a brave effort to cover his confusion. "Mr. Pompernel"—the lady elevated her brows—"do we care anything about hearing of your reprobates? Mr. Bentley here—*our* Mr. Bentley, may I say?—is at the Princeton Theological Seminary—the classmate of our dear Herbert!" The reappearance of the merchant was a welcome diversion.

"I brush good once more," explained the dealer, "before I tie up." Then hesitating, as he balanced the long, narrow, cylindrical package in his arms: "Maybe you like see?"

Mrs. Pompernel thought she would. Bentley aided the dealer's fumbling fingers in untying the cord.

"An excellent idea, my dear," Mr. Pompernel enthused. "A proper business precaution. And there's another thing: now, let me see—where is my fountain pen? I will prepare a little receipt for him to sign. Er—you see, my dear, I look upon these things as a practical business man. And I think, as a practical man of affairs, if you will allow

me to handle this for you I can save—er—a margin. For instance now, there's the usual two per cent. cash dis—"

"No!" The lady exploded it with the force of a sunset gun, and Mr. Pompernel's colors dropped from the mast. His wife studied the dealer anxiously again, then flashed a look at Mr. Pompernel that was all but annihilating.

"I think he heard you!" she hissed.

Indeed the merchant stood in the tense attitude of one whose senses have been arrested—startled—and by the unexpected. Bentley had been slowly "paying out" the roll as Abou Hassan drew it toward him, but his action had been arrested by an odd, startled cry from the old man as his stooping figure ducked above the fabric, remaining transfixed. The young man, wise in his generation, refrained from any comment or inquiry calculated to focus attention upon his good friend, whom he frankly suspected of having stumbled upon some glaring and irremediable defect.

Dorothy drew near, admiring the rug.

"Why, hello, pussy cat!" Bentley's spontaneous salutation, warm and glad-some though it was, was not addressed to the young lady at his side nor to the venerable man whom he confronted. "Nice kitty—good kitty!" he soothed, stooping for a pliant rub of the black arch pushing against his leg.

"Why, what a pretty cat!" and Dorothy, forgetful of the proprieties and their argus-eyed high priestess, impulsively crouched and extended a friendly hand. With a vibrant purr, the twisting animal ran its head into her soft palm and smiled inscrutably.

"One would think he belonged to you," said the young man.

"I've always wanted to own a black cat," said the girl. "They say a black cat brings good luck."

"Is anything the matter, Mr. Hassan?"

It was Mrs. Pompernel's question, modulated in a tone placating, apprehensive and apologetic, as she cut an angry side glance at her husband. For the merchant had drawn a wheezing, hissing intake of breath as he dropped the corners of the rug and backed a step

away from it. In the hand that pushed back his dingy fez there was a tremble that was not all of age nor palsy; and his seamed forehead, as he swept it with his sleeve, was moist with a dew that was odd in the cool, gray shadow that now enwrapped the sidewalk and the narrow street.

"I'll have you just wrap it up again," said the lady with some nervousness, "and place it in the cab. Mr. Bentley, will you be so kind as to count out this money to Mr. Hassan?" She drew a crisp sheaf from her bag.

Abou Hassan's eyes focused it with a gleam as of burning coals, then waned dull and became fireless as wet ashes.

"No! No!" His shriveled brown fist came up and lay like a dried apple against the working cords of his throat. "No! I not take!"

The sudden stillness was eloquent of amazement. Mrs. Pompernel swallowed. "You don't mean—do you mean you want more money?"

Abou Hassan gloomed sullenly at the fortune clutched in her hand, but shook his head.

"No more money—it not that!" He drew a deep, agitated breath. "But this rug, lady—I ver' sorry—ver' sorry indeed, but I not sell."

The lady gasped, and indeed seemed likely to swoon. There was a chorus of ejaculations, of incredulous murmurings.

"Oh, but see here now, old man"—thus familiarly Bentley growled in protest—"you can't do like that, you know. A bargain's a bargain."

"And you won't sell the rug at all?" interjected Mrs. Pompernel. "You mean you are going to keep the rug?"

"No"—it was a cry as he lifted his arm between him and the rug—"not keep, but—" He gulped heavily and with sudden purposeful concentration studied each face in the circle. Bentley answered the beckon of his nod.

"What's the game?" he whispered indulgently, as the Oriental made a sign and drew him to one side.

Abou Hassan's faded eyes lifted to his with an expression that was as near to trust and affection as he had ever bestowed on any human thing.

"I help you—I leave you with maiden," he reminded.

"Sure!" Bentley nodded gratefully.

"But I going do bet' still. Yes, ver' much bet' for you. I not sell rug—and not keep—no, no! I make present of rug—I give away; understand?"

"To *me*?" Bentley's astonishment was wholly unfeigned and natural. "Oh, no, no—you mustn't; I couldn't think of taking such a present!"

"No, no!" The brown claw clutched him tremblingly. "Not you. I give to her—the maiden!"

XIII

THE young man was touched.

The strange attachment manifested by this simple and kindly old man for Dorothy was as inexplicable as it was beautiful. Doubtless she stirred his heart with memories of some cherished one who had touched his life in youth; or perhaps he had found or fancied a resemblance to a beloved daughter who for a time had stood between him and his loneliness and then had been plucked away.

But a twenty-thousand-dollar rug! It seemed incredible in the face of all he had ever heard of the calculating finesse and grasping greed of the Oriental trader. To make such a princely gift to a young lady—and an American young lady at that—one he had never seen before today! It was unbelievable! Down-right sense of fairness constrained him to proffer gentle protest. But Abou Hassan remained firm.

"You be ver' please' if I tell you why—but no, I not do it; you not un'stan'," he insisted. "You not believe!"

Indeed, it was with no lessening of respect for the young man that he fixed upon this conclusion. The youth had been bred in the strange darkness of the Western world, where they derided the promptings of the wise.

He could not understand that the background of yellow, revealed by the glare of open day, was significant of evil and sorrow; nor would he comprehend the menace of the figure of the eagle

in the border—not the standing eagle, Oriental emblem of good luck, but the *descending* eagle, presager of misfortune, as every good Mussulman knew. Not but what these things could be passed along in a sale to one who did not know, and their blighting spell transferred without compunction—but there was that woven in sinister inscription in the border that could not be transferred or evaded by sale, something that more than all else he yearned to impart to the American youth that he might have full understanding of his purpose in making the present to the damsel—the present of something that he dare not retain and must not sell for gold or silver.

For there, in the tiny curves and angles of an Arabic of an older day, was woven the injunction that might be rendered thus:

Sell not, own not, keep not a day;
Who would shun evil, must give away.

And never ban fortified by bell, book and candle approached the penalties and curse for him who through deliberation or ignorance slighted the command.

Meanwhile Mrs. Pompernel watched the conference between the Oriental and Herbert's friend with feelings compounded of apprehension and hope. That the young man was striving with the suddenly conceived affront of the dealer—an affront for which she well knew Mr. Pompernel was responsible—was a thing plain enough to her searching eyes. She clasped her hands nervously, praying that Mr. Bentley might prevail.

With a final gesture, Abou Hassan washed his hands of further relation to the rug, and retired within his doorway. Then Bentley beckoned Dorothy and told her.

"Oh, but auntie!" she murmured, aghast, when at last he made it clear that the intention of the Oriental could not be denied. "She'll be furious!" She thought a moment. I wonder if he'd let me give the rug to auntie instead?"

Bentley stared an instant at her.

"No, he wouldn't let you; and what's more, he'd be mortally hurt. You see,

he's taken the most extraordinary—no not extraordinary, either, but I've an idea the poor old fellow just about worships the ground you walk on. I think you remind him of someone he once knew and loved."

Bentley's sentimental sigh was abruptly choked in the presence of a practical idea.

"I tell you! Why ask him at all? Just give it to her—he'll never know!"

"Oh, but that's deception. Better still, leave me out of it and make it a gift from him. See? Auntie will think *you* did it, and it will—" Dorothy blushed.

"Angel!" It stood for a five-hundred-word sentence the way young Bentley said it.

"Dorothy," with a plaintive wail, "are you just trying to annoy me with that nasty cat? You know I loathe and detest cats!"

Bentley's eyes took an odd glitter as the girl straightened quickly under her aunt's rebuke. The black cat straightened also, indulging in a long, luxurious yawn; then he sat up, leering at Mrs. Pompernel. One might have thought his expression cynically amused.

Bentley suddenly bore the rug to the cab.

"Mrs. Pompernel," he said gravely, "I have to tell you that Abou Hassan will not sell this to you!"

The lady's throat emitted something like a raucous scream.

"But he begs that you will accept it as a present."

Mrs. Pompernel turned pale. Bentley continued hurriedly:

"A present without money and without price." Then impressively: "And on no account must you thank him—it is forbidden. You understand?"

Mrs. Pompernel didn't. But she nodded, her hand feeling for her smelling salts. Vaguely she recalled something she had heard of the practice under Eastern hospitality of making a present of any precious thing that had been admired by the honored guest. And she had been, not merely the customer, but in a sense a guest—there flashed upon her what Mrs. Van Stuphem had said

about the solemn obligations entailed by the sacred rite of coffee drinking.

"Oh, Mr. Bentley," she breathed humbly, "I know it is you who have done this; you reminded him of—"

"Well, well, now never mind about that!" The voice of Herbert's friend was mildly deprecating, and his eyes dropped modestly over the work of again tying up the roll. He passed it into the cab. Mrs. Pompernel received it into her arms with something like a sob. The lady was fairly trembling under the reaction, murmuring almost incoherent expressions of gratitude to Bentley. Abou Hassan's part in the matter seemed relegated to the background.

Dorothy and Mr. Pompernel assumed places in the taxi, and Mrs. Pompernel had just urged and secured Bentley's consent to allow her to drop him at his club, when that young gentleman uttered an ejaculation of dismay and lingered on the curb.

"Oh, I was completely forgetting; how careless of me!"

His swift backward glance passed above the flagging where a velvety figure was writhing in the evolutions consequent upon an impromptu but conscientious toilet. The somnolent peace that lay within the threshold of the cigarette shop seemed to give the young man reassurance. He stooped, gathering the black cat in his arms.

"There is one condition that goes with the present of the rug," he said. "So stupid of me to forget; Mr. Hassan would never have forgiven either of us! And yet it seems so ridiculous, I just hate to say anything about it—so absurd, you know. I reasoned with him and argued and argued—but no use; he flatly said that, unless it was agreed to, the rug would stay here."

"What is it, Mr. Bentley?"

Herbert's friend took a breath. "It's his cat."

"Cat!" Mrs. Pompernel was already shrinking from the nearer proximity of the horrid creature.

The young man seemed embarrassed. Mrs. Pompernel could see that he was trying to modify the force of some shock. He stammered something about the

crazy notions of Orientals about animals—pet animals and especially pet cats. This was a far cry with Mr. Bentley, based upon some half-forgotten school lore about the sacred feline mummies of the ancient Egyptians. He explained that Abou Hassan was going back soon to his own country, and as he had given the rug to Mrs. Pompernel, so did he also wish to make a present of the cat he loved.

"To *me*?" The lady's mouth and eyes widened with horror. "Oh, I couldn't have it! My poor little Agamemnon could never endure it! Besides—" She shuddered.

"I believe," said Bentley, "it was his desire to make division. He wishes—er—that your niece shall have the cat. He said some other crazy, unreasonable thing to the effect that if the cat were not treated kindly, or if he ever learned of it coming back to its old neighborhood, he would have someone call and get the rug. No cat, no rug, seems to be his idea! However," he went on, "of course the whole thing is utterly preposterous, Mrs. Pompernel, and I agree with you. I'll just go in and tell him what you say. I don't care *how* mad he gets—he's crazy!"

He moved to deposit the cat upon the sidewalk, but Mrs. Pompernel checked him with a cry.

Two minutes later the party was rounding the corner of Rector Street into Broadway. The black cat lay in Dorothy's lap, pushing its head against her stroking hand and purring like a motor boat. At peace, too, was Bentley, for he had caught from under Dorothy's lashes a glance of shy, admiring wonder, of gratitude, and it seemed to him perhaps a trace of something else.

But he was less at peace as he stood before his club, looking after the taxi, speeding northward, and in his mind a perturbation.

"By Jove, I completely forgot about the Egyptian cigarettes! And I left the stick the old man gave me! What'll he think?"

He turned away as the taxi was lost in the tide of traffic.

"And now to find some chap who

knows our cousin Herbert and can give me a line on him." He paused, one foot balanced upon the first tread of the steps, oblivious to the grinning faces of a couple of friends within who were speculating upon what new prank of mad Tom Bentley's had caused him to lose his hat while driving in a taxi with a peach—for they had glimpsed the face of Dorothy. "Herbert—Herbert Pompernel! Um!" Again he repeated the name, a puzzled wrinkle in his brow. "Now where in thunder have I heard that name—somewhere before today? Somebody, *some* chap, was telling something the other night—I'm sure of it! By jinnny, that *was* the name—I'd swear to it! And it was something somebody said in one of the card rooms! Now what the— No, it *couldn't* have been Dixon—how in Helena would Dixon know a divinity student? Pshaw! Well, there's one thing certain: I've got to find somebody who *does* know him and can introduce us and explain"—Bentley smiled grimly—"but not explain too much! I wonder if a theological student has a sense of humor? If he hasn't," gloomily, "then he'll call my bluff.

"By Jove!" His eyes flashed a sudden inward enlightenment. "It *can't* be the same, though!" he muttered. "What would a divinity student know about—"

"Hello, Bentley!" came a chuckle. "How did you lose your hat? Did you—"

"Poker!" Bentley's lips breathed.

XIV

"BUT, between ourselves, Bentley, you don't fool me. I'm on!"

The young man with the hard mouth tossed his napkin beside the wreck of the excellent dinner his host had furnished and squared his hands into the pockets of his dinner coat. He nodded, proceeding: "Of course I'm not a fool, and I know perfectly well you are representing the family or more likely some relative who wants to buy up the I.O.U's. You're not after them for yourself; you don't even know the little beast—I know that—and you're lucky!"

He shifted, muttering: "The miserable, slimy, yellow-faced little humbug and hypocrite—ugh!" He sipped copiously from his glass for relief. "That's what Mr. Herbert Spencer Pompernel is—yes, sir!" Oh, I know what I am, all right; but one thing: I don't pretend to be anything better—you know that!" He gave a shrug. "So they want to buy up mamma's baby's little autographs—ch?"

Bentley merely smiled noncommittally and knocked the ash from his cigarette. It was not necessary to talk while the other's flow went on. The wine was carefully selected for a quality of potency that belied its frivolous bead and innocent, springlike sparkle, and the gentleman across the board was only inured to beer.

Thus it was at two A.M., when Bentley, in the privacy of his own apartments, allowed the heavy-lidded Spriggs to draw his coat from his shoulders, he withdrew from the inside pocket a sheaf of small papers secured by an elastic band. They were of odds and ends of sizes and of various hues, each bearing the signature of one Herbert Spencer Pompernel.

With them were two letters in a cramped hand which the young man re-read with his countenance reflecting a curious mixture of astonishment and contempt.

"You might as well have these, too," the gambler had said, as he tossed them upon the package the young man's cheque had purchased; "we'll just let the tail go with the hide. I don't want to keep them, and they're dead giveaways for him—the whining little rat! Only, somebody'd better tell him not to be such a fool again!"

And Bentley had thanked him, with inward determination to tell young Pompernel not only that, but many other things for his uplifting and regeneration—in good time. But first his own affairs pressed.

And as he placed packet and letters in a large blue envelope and then within his wall safe, he reflected grimly upon the ethics of the peculiar doctrine that all's fair in love and war.

"Punk principle!" He clucked disgust. "Why, I know I *couldn't* do a thing like that—not even if I hated the poor chap." And the scion of the Bentleys reddened for the first time in the adventures of the past twelve hours. "But *he* doesn't know that, and I think—I think probably I'm a better poker player than my old college chum!"

And Bentley indulged in a broad grin. But it was checked abruptly, for there was more to do.

There was a cheque to write, payable to the order of one Abou Hassan, and a note to accompany it, addressed to one of the officers of the Ottoman Bank whom he knew personally. And there were instructions to impress upon the tried and faithful Spriggs, with a final injunction to report upon his mission by noon.

"But first of all," he emphasized, "go into the shop of the cigarette dealer and give him this money." Bentley's fingers hesitated an instant between a ten and a twenty-dollar bill, his uncertainty arising from his unfamiliarity with the market price of cats. Ultimately he handed Spriggs both bills. "Don't explain to him—don't linger to answer any questions. Just say," impressively, "that the money is from someone who—er—has done him a great wrong of which *he* knows nothing. And then go in next door to the shop I'm telling you about—old Abou Hassan's—and tell him about this cheque"—he tendered a sealed envelope—"and get him to go to the bank with you. Tell the old fellow that this money is from me as a compliment for his—er—giving me a chance to use his shop yesterday so I could be alone with the—er—girl. *He'll* understand, if you don't."

"Certainly, sir!" Spriggs blinked out of a wooded visage. And presently, when he had snapped out the lights, he went gloomily off to bed himself and lay awake for an hour or two wondering what the Senator would say if he knew his only son was having questionable traffickings with disreputable Turks and other low-moraled foreigners of the Oriental quarter. His thoughts would have been even more gloomy if he had

known the amount of the cheque enclosed in the sealed note intended for delivery to the Ottoman Bank along with the body of Abou Hassan.

But, as Bentley reflected as he stretched himself restfully, it wasn't fair to let the old fellow lose a cent of what he *would* have had but for his queer, crazy, *beautiful* devotion to Dorothy.

A long time he lay there, wide-eyed and unwinking—marveling at the newly discovered delight of just *thinking*. Strange, he thought, that he had never experienced it before.

XV

"You don't mean to say the cat is lost?"

Mrs. Pompernel, from her seat at the library table where she was painfully preparing a club paper with the help of the encyclopedia, turned frowning brows upon her niece and the two maids with her. It was about all she dared risk turning, inasmuch as every movement of her body that communicated itself to her foot was productive of a twinge of pain. Since the accident of the preceding day she had moved about but little, and then only with a goodly shoulder for support on each side. But the club paper must be prepared, and so she had been helped to the library; and presently when she wished to go elsewhere or return upstairs she would have to be helped again, "like a vulgar cripple," as she plaintively commented upon it.

"We can't find him anywhere, auntie," came from Dorothy dolefully.

"I think he's gone, Mis' Pompernel," opined one of the maids. "Simmons says he saw him looking out of the front door a while ago. It was just after he bit the dog—the cat did, I should say."

Mrs. Pompernel turned pale and her eye sought the divan a yard away. Across it she had had them spread the smooth, lustrous perfection of the antique rug. It was where it caught the light wondrously, and ever and anon as she sat there writing she had lifted her eyes, feasting them upon it and letting her spirit gloat in the joy of acquisition.

But if the Oriental's cat were really gone, and if it should repair to its old neighborhood, she was undone; for the eccentric old fool would demand the return of the rug. She recalled stories she had heard of the unfailing homing instinct of cats and dogs that led them back sometimes across hundreds of miles. There was a momentary flash of hope with the thought that perhaps the cat would be killed en route by some gracious agency in the shape of a speeding auto. But she was not really sure that a cat *could* be killed by an auto. She had never heard of such a thing.

"Go back and look again," she gasped, "and don't come back here until you find it. It must be somewhere about the place."

And then she detained her niece a few minutes for the satisfaction of berating her with caustic reproaches. One must have *some* compensation, you know, and things have come to such a pass now you can't talk to your servants as you may to members of your family. If you did, they would leave.

Alone again, Mrs. Pompernel endeavored to resume her concentration upon her theme on "Our Metaphysical Intimations of Karma"; but her brain felt wabbly and distraught and no longer could just the sight of the rug incite theosophical inspiration. Instead, its smooth, restful expanse seemed to allure to repose wholly physical, and Mrs. Pompernel eyed it wistfully.

Perhaps it were best she lie down a while, until her nerves should be more composed. Her hand reached toward the push button on the table—then was withdrawn; the two maids who were wont to enact for her the role of the human crutch were those who were searching for the cat. It were better to leave them so. Perhaps she could manage it herself, the couch was so near.

Cautiously, and with scientific alertness for sign of any protest from the offended member, she slipped along to the level of a chair adjoining. Thence, reaching to the divan, the lady levered her goodly weight across the foot of intervening space and plunked with

mighty momentum upon the receptive springs, breathing a gasp of relief.

Relief short-lived, however—brief as the raindrop's bubble upon the roadside pool!

There was a squawk of rage, a spitting tempest voicing dignity outraged, and from under her back slipped a writhing body, aided by claws that raked with the simulation of steel-barbed fishhooks. Mrs. Pompernel was made sensible of the fact that the thin veneer of a silken negligee is but doubtful protection, considered from more viewpoints than one. She essayed to straighten, the action freeing the last confined quarter of a whirling, cavorting, monstrous projectile that rewarded her by a buffet in the face that sent her to the mat again. Then, taking the most expeditious route to the door, the thing bounded from her head, separating itself with difficulty by reason of entanglements presented by a fluffy pompadour, and like a black, streaking comet, vanished through the door.

Panting and disheveled, Mrs. Pompernel lay an instant hesitating between fainting and hysterics; but the throbbing twinge in the freshly outraged ankle called for measures more effective. Therefore, with rare presence of mind, the lady inhaled deeply and emitted a shriek that would have put to blush the most shrill and raucous of sirens.

Then she waited for the swish and patter of hurrying feet, the murmurs of puzzlement and alarm, the plunge of frightened servitors into the room and all the resultant ejaculations of sympathy and distress. Dorothy would be there and she would take it out on her! To think of the cat being there—probably under the divan all the time the girl was pretending to search for it—and slipping up to the rug just in time for her to encounter it! At least this was the way it looked to Mrs. Pompernel.

But they were not coming. Where was the household—what could they all be doing? Where was Mrs. Pomfret, and where was Simmons?

At that instant, as if invoked and summoned by her thought, she heard Simmons in the hall without.

"Simmons!" she wailed, turning her

head to the door. For there was Simmons, looking in. "Simmons!"

The butler, massive and impressive, stood softly wheezing, but gave no sign of recognition of her presence.

"Oh!" Mrs. Pompernel lifted herself on one elbow and swept back the curtaining fringes from the dismantled pompadour. This impediment removed, she turned upon Simmons the full measure of awe-impelling wrath that radiated with a contraction of her Jovian brows. Time and again, under this projection, she had seen the congested redness of the butler's countenance relapse to sickly tawny yellow and even the purple veinings of his cheeks fade to a wraithlike gray.

"Simmons, you fool!" This time the energy of it vibrated her from head to heel and evoked a warning twinge of pain. She dropped back, closing her eyes and gasping in outraged moans as the man moved toward her. "Simmons are you drunk? Quick—send me Mrs. Pomfret and—"

Her eyes, opening here, disclosed the butler not looking down at her in amaze or consternation, but calmly adjusting the pamphlets and books upon the table.

"Oh-h-h!" she hurled at him.

And there being nothing for it but hysterics, she let herself go. Out of it she had a vision of a plethoric figure moving toward the door and then an impression of the butler's red face sweeping the room again as he stood there an instant, his hand upon the knob. He yawned gently, closing the door behind him.

And then the lady fainted!

XVI

It is a poetic truism that no clarion or trumpet is so instantly potent in breaking the fetters of unconsciousness—whether it be death or the swoon or sleep that simulates it—as just the whispered voice of one whom most we love.

There be cynical critics, however, who aver that there is equal potency in the voice of one whom most we hate.

Certainly Mrs. Pompernel stirred with the first sound of the woman's voice

in the drawing-room that opened on the library. She sighed next, and her eyes opened full upon the pallid bust of James F. Cooper just above the bookcase door. Then she caught her breath and her ears pricked to alertness. Yet it was not Dorothy's voice, but one round, full, assertive and self-confident, a voice with a crisp decision and aggressiveness that almost smacked of masculinity.

"Oh, I won't bother her if she's lying down," it said with finality, and Mrs. Pompernel breathed relief. "I was just passing—had to see a client in this neighborhood and thought I'd kill two birds with one stone. No time to waste on the silliness of social calls, anyway. And here's court coming on next week, you know."

There was a response in her husband's voice, and the pleasure it expressed for his own benefit from the call caused Mrs. Pompernel's face to darken. For the avowal had a note of earnestness.

"You are not looking well, Jasper," she heard next: "You look thinner. What you need is a trip."

Her husband sighed and his murmur was indistinct.

"Stuff!" came the other voice with sharp abruptness. "Even if she would, you don't want to go tagging along with *her*! Maria is bad enough, anyway, but to have to *travel* with her would be a holy horror. What you ought to have, Jasper, is just a trip for a month or two, all by your little 'lonesome.' Paris is the thing for you! Just with nothing to do but loaf about the boulevards and smell the sun-filled air and flowers—sit at the little tables and watch the nations pass—that sort of thing, *that's* what you need! Eh? Oh, yes, you could, if you only had a little spunk—you poor thing!"

The green tone scheme of the library fresco was being admirably supplemented by the delicate similitude of freshly boiled peas that faintly replaced the color in the heavy jowls of the prostrate lady in the room beyond. She coughed loudly and with expression. But they seemed too absorbed to hear.

Her husband mumbled something and was answered by a laugh.

"Well, to Ostend, then—go *there*," she seemed to sigh. "Ah, Jasper, shall I ever forget that summer, or will *you*? Chut! I'm forgetting I'm nearly an old woman—and *am* an old maid lawyer; it's time to cease remembering the things of a quarter of a century ago, isn't it, Jasper?"

"Ach-h-h-m-m!" This time Mrs. Pompernel projected it with vehement insistence. If she only could reach the push button on the table or the one on the wall nearby! But not for worlds would she make the attempt, with the likelihood of disaster overtaking her with the first essay.

"Come on in the library, Kitty. Oh, yes, you can!" Her husband's voice had in it a buoyant coaxing that Mrs. Pompernel had never sensed before. "A half-hour won't make any difference in the long run—it's so long since we had a chance to talk."

Mr. Pompernel's casual glance within the room was the signal for a violent wigwagging of his wife's head and a wrinkling negation of the parrot nose.

"Not in *here*, you fool!" she hissed.

Of all times! When she was endamaged in flesh and raiment, and her despoiled coiffure flowing over her forehead and right ear making her look like one of the cauldron witches the morning after! It was *like* a man!

But Mr. Pompernel's vacuous eye indicated that he did not hear her, or hearing, felt that he had proceeded too far to withdraw.

Under the circumstances, there was nothing to do but simulate slumber; and this she proceeded to do, gritting her teeth with the fortitude of the Roman matron but keeping the field under surveillance through narrowed slits.

There was sapience in so doing, for the pleasantly smiling face that appeared in the doorway was still comely, defying the corroding years. There was undeniable attractiveness there, reinforced by a complexion delicately toned to girlhood's freshness, but defying even the glass of science to find therein the borrowed gloss of art. There was everything that a blind and ignorant man would call "stunning" in the effect of

the carefully arranged blonde hair and the dark modish hat that framed it all, nor would masculinity find any detraction in the carefully careless tiny wisps that here and there strained unfettered to the breeze. There was nothing here of the professional woman of the comic weekly type, but the evidence of radiating femininity and privity to the possession of eyes whose wistful, individual appeal to members of a jury had often nullified the cold-blooded logic and brutal, forensic, masculine eloquence of opposing counsel. For persuasion is oft masterful through reasons that reason never knows, and juries are human and sensitive, and judges as well. The spectacle of Kitty Blander pleading at the bar somehow ever gave the impression that knightly chivalry was being appealed to by youth and beauty in distress.

Certainly she looked good to Mr. Pompernel, a radiant thing; and his not to reason why. Nor did Mrs. Pompernel reason, either—she didn't have to. Her discerning eye saw, as did Mr. Pompernel, the graceful poise of a pretty neck, but she saw also the fine grain that is the triumph of the massager's art; she appraised, as did he, the sweeping beauty of the artlessly lowered lashes, but she discounted length because of their delicate beading.

"The painted hussy! How I'd like to choke her!"

The relish of this desire was stimulated by the fact that the tall figure in the close fitting gown of black was of that mold of form that Mrs. Pompernel for years had vainly sighed for and tried for and starved for and dosed for and traveled far to springs of wide renown to gain.

"Take *this* chair, Kitty." This in a solicitous murmur from Mr. Pompernel as he pushed forward a deep leather rocker.

But Miss Blander knew better. Through her curtained apertures Mrs. Pompernel saw her drape herself in the straight chair before the library table. She carelessly picked up the encyclopedic volume. There was a chuckle.

"Theosophy, eh? Poor Maria's been

cramming for a talk to one of her silly clubs! Dear, dear!" Here she scanned the written notes. "Heavens! I don't wonder Maria had to throw it up and take a nap; and if she reads to them this stuff she has written, they'll all go off!"

Her throat trilled a joyous cackinnation that Mrs. Pompernel reflected indignantly would have awakened a sleeper in the third story back. This sense of outrage made her almost oblivious of the offensive sentiment expressed. But when one is *asleep*, one cannot manifest resentment for calumny that percolates to the hearing.

Mr. Pompernel coughed. "Maria is interested in so many things," he remarked, rubbing his chin.

"So many!" — with fine irony. "Everything except her home!" Then she gurgled again over the manuscript. "Oh, my, you don't know what slushy, dippy stuff this seems to a woman like me!"

The sufferer on the couch closed her eyes tightly and essayed to restrain the quickening pulsation of her bosom. Mr. Pompernel gently ventured something about his wife's ankle probably forcing her to stop work. "She said she didn't get a wink of sleep last night."

"Well, I hope she's having a good nap now." She tossed the papers to the table. Several skimmed onward, bird-like, and alighted on the floor. "Really, you know, Maria ought to take her full quota of sleep at her age. Besides, Jasper, I do think a woman of Maria's disposition is happiest when she's asleep—I do, indeed!"

"I am not asleep at all, Kitty!"

Mrs. Pompernel had gathered her latent forces so as to enunciate this with chilling calm—and she did it, in a low but resonant murmur and with a significant uplift of magisterial brows. Having spoken, she dropped her lashes as before, but slowly, and with that wearied, languid subsidence that gives the effect of tired eyelids on tired eyes. Indeed, her gentle, faintly waxing smile was almost beatific in its suggestion of a patient suffering—a philosophic exaltation above the storms of envy, hatred and malice and all uncharitableness.

But within, what a riot of seething, volcanic rage!

Nor was it chilled to calm, but rather augmented, by the fact that the lady gave no sign of having heard. Mrs. Pompernel realized with chagrin that her rendering of her line had been too finely artistic, a murmur whose dramatic quality was too delicately subtle to pierce the coarsened hearing of her audience. Moreover, the blonde creature was fingering a brass paperknife, jabbing it absently into the "Metaphysical Intimations of Karma." She looked up at Mr. Pompernel.

"Jasper—" It seemed a murmur involuntary, but thoughtful—almost tender, Mrs. Pompernel thought; and of course her husband couldn't know, as *she* did, that that little catch of breath and pretty, hesitant suspension of the lip was all for effect. "Do you know, Jasper, I sometimes wonder if you—"

Another hesitancy, a quick glance through the beaded lashes as if betraying a sudden access of timidity and coy confusion.

Mrs. Pompernel, eyeing her from under her lids with glances like barbed thorns, breathed with heavy congestion and wondered what it was that Miss Blander was wondering. On the whole, she was glad they thought her still asleep.

"What, Kitty?" Mr. Pompernel hitched nearer.

"Oh, nothing!" A tiny sigh. Her lashes drooped lower. "What does it matter? *You* don't care!"

Mrs. Pompernel sniffed, then swallowed hard. Gossip had long since forgotten the youthful romance that had been between her husband and Kitty Blander, but *she* had not!

"But I *do* care, Kitty!" Mr. Pompernel's tone inflected mild reproach. Mrs. Pompernel all but choked.

Mr. Pompernel cleared his throat faintly.

"What were you going to say, Kitty? Tell me," he insisted.

"Oh, I'm silly—I know I am—but—" She laughed softly. "Oh, I know you'll laugh at me, but so often I think—I mean, I wonder if you are happy, Jasper?"

Her graceful fingers seemed to press her eyes lightly, quickly; then she flashed at him a sunny, shyly appealing smile, and softly laughed again, looking down.

"Do you think of me, Kitty?" And this time Mr. Pompernel looked downward, twiddling his thumbs. He sighed. "It's awfully good of you, considering how I—" He twiddled faster. "I was awfully mean to you, Kitty; I behaved like a—"

Miss Blander's head lifted a little haughtily. "We won't speak of that, Jasper—shall we? All that is of the dead, dead past!" A graceful gesture from the wrist buried it irrevocably.

This done, she lugged it promptly from its grave again.

"You married to get money, and Maria married you that she might be a Pompernel!" The lady's laugh was a mirthless gurgle. "Maria was incapable of marrying for love—just *incapable*; so you mustn't blame her."

Mr. Pompernel stroked his whiskers, murmuring a feeble demur.

Miss Blander straightened. "Jasper Pompernel, you know I *know*"—with pretty imperiousness—"Maria never loved anything in the world but herself. *You* know that!" with smiling asperity.

Mr. Pompernel coughed nervously. "Oh, now, Kitty, there's Herbert," in feeble protest.

"Herbert—yes, Herbert!"—with scorn. "Because her precious Herbert is just like her. Oh, yes, Herbert—I'll grant you Herbert; and then there's the dog, too; let's not forget the dog!" She touched Mr. Pompernel on the arm, leaning toward him with a playful banter, the implication of a jest they held in common. "You never saw any tender side of Maria toward *you*, though, did you? No, I'll warrant you never did! And you never will. Maria is just constitutionally a shrew!"

This was too much! The martyr upon the couch, reduced almost to a comatose condition from excess of spleen, roused as under the stimulus of a galvanic shock. With a cluck like an angry hen, she deliberately lifted her head and addressed her husband:

"Mr. Pompernel"—with choking dignity—"I will ask you to assist me upstairs."

She knew that this time she was launching a bolt from the blue. She was making unmistakable the fact that she was aroused to wakefulness and mindful of what was going on; and even as she spoke, she anticipated the consternation following the revelation. There would be a sudden confused upstarting with both—the upsetting of a chair perhaps. Mr. Pompernel would scramble solicitously to her side, and with a grasp—it would be heavy—upon his shoulder, she would sweep from the room with the majesty of Martha Washington. She would not speak to Kitty Blander, but would pass her with a stare that would be coldly impersonal, unseeing, but as performing as the all-pervasive radium. It would be sweet unction just to see this woman shrink backward and crinkle up, reddened with dismay—and tongueless. No one, she was sure, had ever seen Kitty Blander reddened with anything save a purchasable commodity of the drug shops—and assuredly never tongueless!

All this was summed in the lightning reflection that accompanied her speech to her husband.

But the cue did not induce the dramatic situation expected. True, the blonde creature blinked a little, but it might be due to the streak of sunlight athwart her face. She did not look at Mrs. Pompernel.

But she spoke.

"Sit down—oh, never mind about that, Jasper!" Miss Blander's gesture was gracefully remonstrative. "I have so little time to talk to you, and I don't want to lose a second for such trifles. Don't bother!"

For this was the precise psychological moment that Mr. Pompernel had started up in his chair, his eye betokening his purpose of adjusting the shade of a window through which the sunlight came. But Mr. Pompernel's back being presented to his wife, she did not see his glance at the window shade, and therefore the correct cognition of action and purpose was lost to her.

"Mr. Pompernel, do you hear me?"

It would seem that he did not, as he appeared to be all eyes, ears and absorption for the smiling, vivacious lady around the corner of the table—in whose rapid utterance and accelerated facial play, accompanying absolute contempt for her presence, she read insolent purpose of premeditated affront to her here under her own roof, the deferred climax of two decades of mutual dislike and jealousy.

"Ah!"

Mrs. Pompernel took a deep breath and brought her body to half-erectness, while her nails dug themselves into the fibers of the rug. She stiffened defensively under sheer animal sensing of the presence of a menace, the subconscious warning of impending danger—what you will; and while she was frightened a little at the instance of so reckless an abandonment of the sacred comities of social life, she was of that spirit that occasionally welcomed a reversion to the simple, direct eloquence of a more primitive day. Therefore she gritted her teeth with grim purpose of meeting the issue with Amazonian courage.

For the challenge conveyed by the blonde creature's deportment seemed unmistakable, and the issue was unavoidable. Indeed, so far as Mrs. Pompernel was concerned, there was no disposition to avoid it. She had an outraged sense that Miss Blander had seized upon the moment as one opportune for offense and insult, in that she had fortuitously found her enemy prostrate, disheveled and to all appearances badly *hors de combat*. Accordingly she had hurled her gage into the arena and was now pirouetting and prancing, preliminary to charging roughshod over her victim.

Well, she would show her!

Mrs. Pompernel's eyes took on the gleam of battle and her nostrils actually dilated like unto those of the oft instanced warhorse. For the *cartel* was a thing that matched her own intrepid spirit, and she was willing for it to be the preliminary to a battle royal—a *guerre à outrance*; in fact, it would suit the fast waxing riot of her blood if it could be a

guerre à mort! Yes, indeed, she had always hated Kitty Blander, but she had never known how much she hated her until now! Then came quick mental revision: no, she didn't *hate* Kitty Blander; she just despised her—and sincerely pitied her. Yes, that was it; she truly pitied her, just as she had pitied her in her vain efforts to snare Jasper Pompernel over twenty years before. And now the poor creature had the vanity—the barefaced effrontery—to think that her old spell over Mr. Pompernel still maintained, and that she could force him to sit there and give her his undivided attention, to lend himself as her foil in wounding and insulting *her*, Maria Pompernel! It was just too ridiculous!

A grim smile touched Mrs. Pompernel's lips, as also did her tongue. With deliberation, and without so much as even a glance disdainful at the fair face confronting her, she inflated to full capacity and summoned a tone of voice that experience avouched would levitate Mr. Pompernel even from the bed of slumber:

"Jasper Pompernel!"

It was a cacophonous projection, but concentratedly percussive as a bottle of soda pop.

XVII

AND Mr. Pompernel never moved!

Aye, never even so much as flicked an ear!

In the first amazing, overwhelming realization of this physical phenomenon, Mrs. Pompernel could only blankly stare, stunned to a vast stupefaction. Her tongue, normally as resilient as a coil of spring-tempered steel, dropped flaccid upon her gums, relaxed under a sudden, unfamiliar hebetation.

Only for a moment's span, however.

The birdlike laughter of Kitty Blander—mocking, it seemed to Mrs. Pompernel—roused her as from a trance. Her mind did not attempt to grope after what the woman was saying; it was enough that with her—it was to laugh! Hers the triumph of the first joust; and for her, Maria Pompernel, the humiliation of a broken lance. The sense of it filled her with a fierce, overmastering rage against her husband—the dolt, the fool!

"Jasper!"

Then she swelled to a vibrating, mighty crescendo of wrath:

"Do you understand that I am speaking to you, sir?"

The bald spot before her nodded; really, however, it was but a responsive affirmation to the lady just beyond. An adventurous fly aviator alighted upon the polar expanse and wandered curiously about, unhindered, unflicked by handkerchief or flip of hand. But so far as concerned Mrs. Pompernel's imperative interpellation, the vulnerable pinkish poll appeared not vulnerable at all, but serenely impenetrable, as impervious to onslaught as the Rock of Gibraltar.

"Oh, in-deed!"

Mrs. Pompernel said it tentatively, but with offensive, significant intimation directed not at Mr. Pompernel. With it she sent a light, tremulous laugh, barbed with bitter contempt that she knew would make Miss Blander wince. But, as if to show her withers were unwrung, that lady at that instant lifted a joyous, merry effervescence of laughing comment, leaning back and directing her gaze a foot above Mrs. Pompernel's head.

"Poor Maria!" she bubbled against a figment of cambric. *"If you could just see her as I do—oh, she is so ridiculous, Maria is! No, no, don't move, Jasper—"* for Mr. Pompernel's eyes had again anxiously sought the source of the intrusive sunbeam. Miss Blander hitched her chair out of its path. *"But do you know, Jasper!"*—here her face sobered to an expression of wistful sympathy—*"my heart just bleeds for you when I see Maria so disagreeable to you—you know everybody talks about it and says it's a shame!"* She sighed. *"You know I don't want to criticize Maria to you—you know that—but people are always saying that we are such old friends, you and I, that I ought to speak, don't you know. Not that I'd ever for the world be one to say a word against poor Maria—nothing that I wouldn't be willing to say to her face. I just hate to stir up your mind about it and trouble you; that's what I think of!"* The blonde

lady looked distressed. "But you *will* forgive me, won't you?" She hitched nearer, her lashes tremulous with concern. "Please say you do!"

Her shapely arm curved toward him with charming impulsiveness, and Mr. Pompernel would have been inhuman not to have taken her fingers within his in a gentle pressure that gave her assurance of full absolution.

Mrs. Pompernel cleared her throat.

"If you will just ring the bell for me, Mr. Pompernel, I will not *disturb* you further!" She tried to speak with dignity but could not control a hoarse tremulo of passion. "If I could reach it myself, I assure you—assure you I would not trouble you."

The launching of this address caused Mrs. Pompernel to lose a sentence or two of the intervening colloquy.

"Ah, no—you haven't changed a bit, Kitty," was what met her ear. "No, indeed, you're not a day older!" Mr. Pompernel's earnestness was convincing. "Your hair is really lighter, more golden, seems to me—don't *you* notice that it is?"

Mrs. Pompernel was constrained to a mocking interpolation that was almost a hoot.

"But your complexion, Kitty!" Mr. Pompernel dropped to an impressive asperate. "Your complexion—oh, wonderful! Why, Kitty, your complexion is even prettier than—"

"*Ouch!*" The exclamation testified to Mrs. Pompernel's tempestuous recklessness in essaying to bring her foot under her.

"Than it was when you were twenty," her husband concluded, not seeming to heed the interruption.

"Ah, now, Jasper, you're flattering me!" And Miss Blander's orbs bent a side glance of coy reproach. "I know—just *now* I must be looking older. Why—why, it seems as if I'd have to—"

"Kitty, you don't—honestly! You're just—h'm—as pretty as you were when we—h'm—when we"—Mr. Pompernel gulped softly—"when we were engaged."

The pretty one's sunshade traced a pattern at her feet.

"You *did* use to think me pretty, didn't you, Jasper? But you used to say so many things; I wonder if you ever did mean *any* of them?"

"Every one, Kitty!"

She sighed. "Do you remember the day you first told me you loved me?"

"*Don't* you think you two have insulted me enough?" It was with difficulty that Mrs. Pompernel brought herself to propound the question.

Mr. Pompernel seemed to groan.

"Si-i-mmons!" lifted a voice in the wilderness. "Aw-w-w-w, Simmons!" Mrs. Pompernel's eyes ranged a little wildly.

"Those were happy days—happy, happy days, Kitty!" Mr. Pompernel's utterance had a somber, froggy quality.

Mrs. Pompernel compressed her lips tightly and her eye measured again the four feet intervening between her and Mr. Pompernel's chair—the same chair with which she had bridged the gulf from the table to the divan, but which he had incontinently appropriated and moved away. Despite a certain quality of unwinking fixity in her gaze which hunters aver is peculiar to the mountain cat about to pounce, the lady was not thinking of Mr. Pompernel's back, but of the push button at the table's edge. If she could but reach that!

But as things were, it was a goal that could only be obtained by resort to the undignified and precarious propulsive expedient known to the vulgar as hopping. Yet Mrs. Pompernel hesitated.

That which gave her pause was not so much the consciousness that the mode of locomotion was inelegant as the profound conviction that with her fleshy amplitude she was bound to take a cropper at the feet of her enemy. True, there remained the alternative of dropping to the floor and crawling. But Kitty Blander should never reduce her to that! If someone would only come in!

She again dropped back, and inflating to full bellows capacity, emitted a yowl that sounded in her own ears like the piercing screech of the pibroch.

"Help!" she bawled. "Help! Oh, help!"

"And we sat there on the rocks by the

sea," murmured Miss Blander, "and I read to you out of the padded leather copy of Tennyson you gave me." She sighed. "Do you remember the tender sweetness of those lines?"

"You fools, dolts, *idiots!*" Mrs. Pomfret—Simmons—Dorothy—where are you? Oh, you—" Mrs. Pomfret collapsed, breathless.

"And the sound of a voice that is still," Miss Blander finished feelingly. "I think 'Break, break, break' is so soulful, don't you, Jasper?"

"Awfully—oh, my, yes!" Mr. Pomfret seemed to rouse from gloomy meditation. "Sometimes at lunchtime I walk down to the Battery and seem to hear the waves against the seawall saying, 'Break, break, break,' when I'm blue about stocks tumbling," he finished dismally. "What was some more of that poem? You used to recite it all, Kitty."

"Help!" The victim upon the couch clutched her head—"Help, somebody! Oh, if you *don't* come here, I'll—" She choked, falling back again upon the rug.

Miss Blander smiled dreamily upward and murmured:

"I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

"I don't believe I remember the rest of it."

Mr. Pomfret coughed nervously. Then he brightened. "But what was that poem of Tennyson's about the fellow who went off and got wrecked on a desert island and never came back till his wife was married again?"

"You mean 'Enoch Arden.'"

"Um!" Mr. Pomfret's grunt was dubious. Then he proceeded with fresh animation: "You know, Kitty, often and often I think of that poem when I'm sitting down there at the Battery, watching the ships going out; and I get to wondering which of 'em will never come back."

Here Mr. Pomfret embraced his knee, hunching forward with something of an air of contemplative relish. "There was one I saw once bound for the Pacific around Cape Horn. I heard after-

ward"—his bosom lifted with a sigh—"that that ship was wrecked and everybody cast away on some uncharted island."

"Too bad!" But Miss Blander's regret seemed perfunctory.

"Some things," said Mr. Pomfret gloomily, "happen in poems and stories, but never in real life."

"Real life! Why, my dear Jasper"—Miss Blander hitched nearer with sudden enlivened earnestness—"the trouble is you don't try to live real life. Today life is essentially practical, and modern progress solves all of its exigencies—understand?"

Mr. Pomfret grunted tentatively.

"Divorce," resumed Miss Blander with impress of professional enthusiasm—"divorce meets every domestic woe. Divorce today is an institution—*not* an alternative, as many crudely suppose, but a beneficent diversification to life, binding society—I use the word in its conservative sense, of course—into a more intimate solidarity, yet giving to marriage a touch of omnigenous enlivenment. Do you follow me?"

"Er—" Mr. Pomfret stroked a whisker, head on one side.

"What I mean to say is that there are abundant happy days for you yet, Jasper—you are entitled to them!" The lady relapsed from her professional poise for an instant and toyed with the tassel of her sunshade. "Of course it's only my feeling for your happiness that makes me tell you this; it's only *you* I'm thinking of, you understand; but what you ought to do, what you must do, what you will *have* to do is—*divorce Maria!*"

Mrs. Pomfret sat up with a shriek. "Oh-h!" One arm clutched the rug; the other angrily swept back a cataract of dismantled hair. "You insolent—"

Even Mr. Pomfret fell backward. "Divorce Maria?" he gasped.

Miss Blander's graceful shoulders shrugged. She looked impersonally at Mrs. Pomfret or seemingly through her, and her voice was composed, gently remonstrative:

"It's the only thing you *can* do, isn't it? You don't think *she's* ever going to

change, do you?" The smile addressed to the wall behind Mrs. Pompernel's head was mildly quizzical. "Why, you silly man, as I tell you, a divorce is nothing—not nowadays—that is, among people who are anybody! Why, most of my clients are litigants for divorce—oh, yes, you know it is my special practice; and, Jasper, I have never had to go out of my set—never! Some of them have been to me several times, and others give me all of their divorce business—wouldn't think of going to anyone else. "You see," confidentially, "my great specialty is evidence—my social position brings me into such intimate personal relations with the principals, don't you know—you understand! Now, there's Maria." She moved still nearer, lifting her chair this time with a businesslike air. Her voice dropped impressively. "Now you would think Maria would be difficult!" She paused dramatically.

"I—er—" Mr. Pompernel stirred uneasily.

"But not for me!" She smiled reassurance. "In two weeks I could have more evidence than we could possibly need!"

"You snake!" The sufferer upon the couch uttered it feebly, being spent in strength and choked with emotion. Mr. Pompernel shrank back in his chair and twiddled his thumbs distressfully.

"Oh, now, Kitty," he murmured in protest, "you're off the track there. I will say this for Maria: there aren't any facts in the world to base—"

"Facts! I wish you'd listen to the man!" Miss Blander's delicately penciled brows lifted an invocation to the point in the wall immediately behind Mrs. Pompernel's head. "My dear Jasper, who's talking about facts? I said evidence!"

"But I don't see—"

"Of course you don't see! Why, my dear Jasper, evidence is the business of the private detective agencies. I use three agencies, and they are splendid—so efficient! Of course I pay them well, but my clients expect that. You know, Jasper," demurely, "divorces are expensive, but, oh, the private agencies are so clever, so ingenious! They meet every

obstacle. Why, the agencies I employ could find evidence against Caesar's wife!

"But, really, I must go. Now, you think about all this, Jasper, and I'll see you again. I'll attend to getting the evidence all right—you leave that to me!"

And she rose, standing superbly confident, but there was not even a glance toward the lady upon the couch. For the first time, something like a chill of fear struck through Mrs. Pompernel. A sudden sense of impotency swept over her, and she cowered as the defenseless might before the drawn sword of an open enemy. Well she knew of some of Kitty Blander's professional work; but that she should ever try to poison Jasper!

Objects of a sudden grew blurred to Mrs. Pompernel, faded to gray and then to black. For a moment or two words about her died to silence, and then, through her slowly lifting lids, she had a consciousness of her husband and Miss Blander standing close beside her and looking down.

"But what I never could see, Jasper," Miss Blander was saying, "is why anyone should ever want to have a worn, faded thing like that around!"

Mr. Pompernel nodded thoughtfully, pursing his lips.

"It seems to me I *would* like something not so old," he admitted, "something a little fresher, you know. Something with a *little* more color would suit my taste better, I must say."

Mrs. Pompernel raised herself on elbow.

"Oh, you think so, do you—you *brute!*" She choked, battling to select a stream of words from out of the confluent tides surging to her lips. "Well, you'll have a hard time getting it, let me tell you that, sir! There'll be no divorces in *this* family. I'll see to that for my innocent child's sake!"

Then she turned her vials upon the bowed head of the lady with the sunshade. But Miss Blander's head seemed bowed, because she was fingering the border of the Persian rug.

"You are a shameless, designing woman, Kitty Blander," she pronounced

tremulously, "but you are my cousin—and—and this is my roof; I'll try to remember my place—"

"Proper place is in a museum," opined Miss Blander, dropping the rug corner with a shrug and a light laugh that provoked from Mr. Pompernel a slight responsive smile. She turned away, moving slowly out through the other room. Mr. Pompernel followed, without so much as another glance at the couch.

"Now you think over our conversation, Jasper," came in a murmur. And then: "Oh, stuff—don't tell *me* that; I know better! You *couldn't* care for Maria—why, it would be unnatural!"

There was another mumble.

"Ah, yes, *if*" came in Miss Blander's smooth tones—"if she would only be different—but that fond hope, my poor friend, is absurd. Why, you might as well look for a yellow pumpkin to turn into a golden coach—like the one in the fairy story, don't you know—as to expect Maria ever to change from a shrew to a loving wife. And you know, my poor man, that this is the twentieth century, and magic and fairies and benevolent witches are things gone with all of our other illusions. My, why what a pretty cat! Oh, I just love cats, and it's the strangest thing how fond animals always are of me. Kitty! Kitty! See how it comes to me! What nice fur it—Ouch! Oh, you nasty beast!"

Out at the front door Miss Blander hung for a last word.

"I think likely I'll drop in next week and hear Maria read her paper at the meeting of the Metaphysical Circle—it just occurs to me that I'm a member of it. But I don't wish you to tell her I'm coming. You see, I want an opportunity of questioning her chauffeur." And Miss Blander nodded with significance into Mr. Pompernel's blank countenance. "Oh, I will get the evidence all right. And I think"—the lady's golden halo leaned toward him with earnest confidence as she gathered her skirt—"I think I can get you alimony, too."

And with her good-bye an insistent, prolonged tintinnabulation rang from somewhere far at the back. It was simultaneous with the instant that a

figure collapsed beside the library table within, an upward reaching arm firmly pressing the ivory disk set in the table's edge.

XVIII

"BUT, Tom," Dorothy was protesting, "he's likely to be home now any day or hour. He's liable to walk into this house any minute."

Bentley's murmur was vague. Then he said absently: "Will be so glad to meet him."

Dorothy started to laugh, then sobered. "You *know* you won't! I wish, Tom," coaxingly, "you would tell me what you are going to do; I think you might."

Bentley chuckled. "Depends on my old college chum," he said, "not on me."

"But you know very well the minute he sees auntie—"

"Oh, that reminds me: how is auntie today?"

Dorothy pouted, hitching back an inch—or less.

"I told you—but you were not attending—that auntie's ankle is almost well. Dr. Tigert says it would have been all right days ago if she had not strained it going downstairs to work in the library that first day after we met you. Why, you know they found her on the floor, completely prostrated. Wasn't that awful?"

"Dreadful!"

"But I think auntie will be downstairs tomorrow."

"What!" he ejaculated. Then feebly: "Oh, will she?" And it cannot be said that the intelligence seemed to afford the young man unmixed joy. In fact, he appeared unreasonably depressed, considering that upon the card he sent up every day he always penciled a yearning for an early termination of Mrs. Pompernel's seclusion, and an expression of his sorrow and deep sympathy.

"Aren't you glad?" Dorothy's eyes twinkled, belying her ingenuousness. "Now auntie can receive your calls herself instead of sending in poor little me as her representative. And then," de-

murely, "I won't get scolded every day because she thinks I'm not nice to you, and that I just receive you and go out driving with you because she makes me. But I just don't see how anything can ever come of it, Tommy dear," she ended despairingly—"because there's Herbert."

"Don't you worry about Herbert," said Tommy cheerfully. "Really"—with impressive confidence—"if it weren't for our cousin Herbert sitting in the game, I should feel I was up a tree—punctured, you know. Yes, sir, there would be breakers ahead!" Bentley disdained nice precisions of rhetorical accuracy, preferring a wider amplitude of expression. "But as it is now, I expect to swim out, holding on to the hair—so to speak—of my old college chum."

Dorothy's pretty brows puckered, and he continued with earnestness, glancing furtively at the doorway.

"Why, angel, if our auntie knew I was my governor's son—whew!" He fell back, beating his hand in the air. "Well, I'd never get across the family doormat again, that's all; and auntie would burn formaldehyde candles here from basement to garret. Oh, I tell you that's right—I know! It's this way: you see, the governor blocked some pet bill or something she was behind—held it up to ridicule in the Senate and shot holes through it in his newspapers. And he just got our dear auntie's goat, and she doesn't think he's fit to live, and yet killing would be too merciful—that sort of opinion of him. You see where I'd be, if she got on!"

"Oh!" Dorothy's face lengthened. Then she started, while a flood of color dyed her face.

"What, angel lamb?" cooed the young man tenderly. "What is it?"

"We could"—breathlessly—"we could elope!"

"What—and let you lose all the fun of sporting your pretty new things and being married by a bishop? Well, I guess not!" For young Bentley had three sisters, and was wise beyond his years. "Especially"—this with indignation—"especially as the old dame—your dear auntie, I should say—is allowing you to pay for your trousseau out of your own

income!" Bentley snorted. "No, sir; a girl doesn't get married but once—at least *you* won't, precious, will you?—and it ought to be done up to the handle—that's what I think!" And, illustratively, Bentley jammed his hands up to the wrists into his pockets.

Dorothy glowed at him.

"And, Tom, I wrote to Herbert the next day—I told him!"

"The deuce!" He jerked to erectness as on springs. "Oh, did you? How did you know where he—"

"I wrote him to London, Ontario, in care of the International Christian Abstinence Association—or, rather, in care of the secretary of the convention. He would know Herbert, you know."

"Oh!" Bentley seemed to breathe relief. "Oh, yes, *he* would know Herbert, of course. Why, what—what is it?"

For Dorothy had suddenly sprung to her feet and stood, her finger tips to mouth, and seemingly listening. She bent quickly to him, whispering:

"Tom, I think"—She caught his arm in apprehension—"oh, Tom, it's Herbert!" She gasped. "What shall I do?"

"Steady!" He was on his feet, towering above her. In the hall without was heard a snarl, apparently in reply to Simmons:

"But I don't *want* her waked up, I tell you—now do you understand? I'm tired—don't want to be bothered. I'll let her know I'm here when I'm good and ready. Is my cousin here, d'you know?"

Dorothy shrank a little, but the blue eyes above her smiled down quiet reassurance.

"Bout face—march!" he whispered. And Dorothy took a deep breath and straightened. "Just bring him in here, Dolly dear. I'll do the rest." And he rubbed his hands together, his eyes sparkling.

Outside she was greeted with enthusiasm. Then came a sulky remonstrance:

"But I think you might give us a kiss, Dorothy. Nice sort of way to treat a fellow you're engaged to when he's been gone ten whole days! . . . What's

that? Naw, I didn't get any letters—such an awful crowd there, you know. Say, Dorothy, did you write me now—honest, no fooling? . . . What say?" Then in a lower tone: "Who? . . . Naw—oh, say, I don't want to meet anybody; I—"

"Well, well, well! How *do* you do, old man?" Bentley, stepping swiftly through the doorway, found he was pumping the limp arm of a vealy youth whose gold spectacles were glazed with lenses of phenomenal roundness, giving him a sort of brownie look. These were topped by yellow cotton eyebrows and hair. "We Princeton men, Miss Morton, have a grip for one another that we recognize even in the dark!" Whereupon Bentley strengthened the grip by affixing his left digits to young Pompernel's elbow, thus gently insinuating the dazed youth into the drawing-room and seating him with Dorothy. Then he hitched a chair in front of them and beamed.

"Well, well, but it's good to see you, old fellow!" He clapped one hand upon his own knee and one upon young Pompernel's. "I was just this minute saying to Miss Morton here—who was kind enough to come down to entertain me on behalf of your mother—I was just saying: 'I don't believe Herbert ever *is* coming home; and I've waited in the city so long for one of our old Princeton shakes with him!'"

The spectacled one blinked vacuously and essayed a smile in lieu of words. It was deuced awkward he couldn't remember to call this fellow's name, nor even place him among the fifteen hundred students with whom he had enjoyed intermittent association during the past three years. The alarming conjecture suddenly seized him that this must be one of the legion who at some time had fixed him with a loan. In truth, it was the only explanation he could conceive of a college mate's waiting to see him, or wanting to see him, at all. This, too, would account for the fellow's cordiality.

Having settled upon this conclusion with lightning mental dispatch, young Pompernel slumped in spirit as well as in his chair.

He wondered what he had better say. He wished Dorothy would go before this fellow said something himself—something he didn't want him to say. With the eyes in his pasty face screwing to slits, he speculated shrinkingly as to whether he *had* said anything already. But no, it seemed scarcely likely; the chap *wouldn't* be so raw as that. Besides, Dorothy evidently hadn't got to know the fellow very well; the questioning puzzlement of her stare showed that. But young Pompernel groaned inwardly, having his own reasons for uneasiness over the proximity here of anything Princetonian. On the whole, it was probably safer that Dorothy was present.

He had just reached this conclusion when another slap on the knee and a playful pinch of the patella roused him to the sense of some remark of the strange young man from Princeton.

"Er—what say?" feebly.

"Why, I think Miss Morton here had her doubts about our being at college together." Unblushingly he turned his eyes upon Dorothy, who dared not look. "Really," with a hearty laugh, "do you know, Pompernel, I have a sneaking suspicion that your cousin here thought I was just stringing her, because she said she never had heard you mention me."

"Oh!" remarked Pompernel, swallowing. For the good-looking, athletic chap rubbed his curly poll above the ear and seemed vastly amused. Pompernel, accordingly, rubbed his chin.

"Yes, honest—I'm not joking; so I wish you'd tell your cousin I'm not the impostor she thinks me, and that I *am* one of your college friends." And the laughing eyes met Pompernel's frankly, expectantly.

That young man gulped. "Why—oh, yes." He chirped an effort at speech:

"Awfully sorry I missed you." If he only knew what the fellow's name was! "Been away, you know—convention—London, Ontario."

"Oh, yes—the convention!" Bentley inclined forward solicitously, hugging his knee. "Big crowd as usual, I sup-

pose? Thought once I'd go myself. Say," eagerly, "don't you like London? Of course you do—might have known it. Good place for a convention, too, isn't it? I suppose they let you meet in the Capitol building as usual?"

This was a glide on thin ice, as Bentley was not sure of there being such a public building at London, Ontario. But Pompernel's murmured acquiescence, though accompanied by a flush, would seem evidence of his error.

"And—er—let me see: that new hotel they've got there—what is the name of that hotel? I suppose you stopped there?"

"No; I—" Young Pompernel shifted the position of his legs. "That is, we were entertained in homes—Christian families, you know."

"Oh, yes—why, of course!" Bentley's eye lighted. "But that new hotel there, Miss Morton—one of the most beautiful things you ever saw!" He faced Dorothy with ingenuous enthusiasm—or, at least, he faced her ear, for she seemed engrossed in a painting opposite. "Oh, really, when you get down to it, there's nothing like it in New York—I mean for beauty—oh, nothing! Gift of an eccentric old miser, I believe. Oh, must have cost millions. And there's this magnificent marble structure—occupies a whole block—in a little hole of a town, Miss Morton—for London *can't* have over two or three thousand, do you think, Pompernel? No, just a village almost. What is the name of that hotel? Funny I can't seem to remember it!"

He rubbed his chin, while his gaze swept the room seeking for the treacherous, elusive name. Moreover, young Pompernel, murmuring vaguely, betrayed by the roaming of his eyes to walls and ceiling the singular coincidence that he had forgotten the name as well.

"Ah!" The ejaculation was at precisely the instant that Bentley's gaze fell upon the painting in which Miss Morton was absorbed. It was a war subject, full of gore and glory. "Why, I know now—the Battle House!"

"Oh, yes!" And young Pompernel coughed, fidgeting uneasily. He rose.

"I say—er—you'll be back again,

won't you—er—old fellow? I'm just back, you know, and haven't seen my mother—you understand."

"Why, I tell you, old chap"—Bentley also rose, moving a foot or two with his old college friend—"I just wanted to see you about a little matter—you know." A wink here, followed by a steady stare, seemed to have a wilting effect upon Pompernel. "And a friend of ours asked me to see you for him, too, if I would." In a lowered voice: "You know, Rickey Macpherson." Then, as Pompernel leaned against the door-frame, Bentley presented a cheerful after thought: "But I can wait just as well until you come down. I'd like to finish telling Miss Morton about my collection of butterflies and postage stamps—perhaps that would be better." And Bentley backed away.

Young Pompernel sighed relief at the respite.

"But—er—you won't go away now, old chap?" This with an affectation of anxiety that he knew was rather clever, considering that he was pretty sure in his own mind the fellow *would* go away. He would when night fell and he got hungry!

So Pompernel left, smiling grimly at the box he had left Dorothy in. It was easy to see she was bored to death. Postage stamps, indeed—and butterflies! One of those muffs who are always collecting things! Poor Dorothy! And he chuckled without sympathy. But gee, what luck she had been there!

With the departure, Bentley executed a pirouette of joy.

Dorothy sniffed. "I hope you're satisfied," severely. And the *timbre* in her voice brought the young man's evolutions to an abrupt termination.

"Oh"—her little heel stamped smartly—"I just think you're perfectly awful! No, no, *no*, sir"—tossing her head from him—"you needn't think you can smooth—Go away now! No, I don't want to have anything more to do with you! Poor Herbert! Oh, I'm not joking; I just think you're horrid—yes I do. You needn't think I don't because I'm laughing; anybody would laugh—you'd make a dog laugh the way you go

on! Oh, I should think you'd be ashamed of yourself? . . . No, I don't really believe you are one single bit!"

Then with sudden distress: "Oh, Tom, how *can* you be such a humbug?"

Young Bentley looked rather abashed. "I don't know, angel dewdrop," gloomily—"unless I get it from the governor. They say dad's the slickest poli—I mean, the greatest manager of men in the State. But I can tell you one thing"—brightening: "many's the time I've heard my mother say she was the happiest wife in America. And I really believe—I really believe she is, Dolly."

Dolly's eyes glistened. "I'm not afraid, Tom," she said softly.

XIX

"SAY, I want to see you!"

Herbert Pompernel spoke in a shrill tremulo from the doorway. A stickler for precision of speech might have held that he *was* seeing Bentley, inasmuch as his eyes were widened to the utmost.

That gentleman touched his breast and smiled questioning surprise. "Me?"

"Yes, *you!*" Pompernel panted it.

"Oh!"

Bentley said it faintly. His mouth gaped and his eyes rolled at Dorothy in a frightened way, but with a little jerk she almost turned her back upon him. A dispassionate observer would have guessed that the young man slumping into the arms of his chair was more than surprised—even rudely shocked—at the change of mien that less than one short hour had worked in his old college friend. Pompernel waited, breathing deeply.

Bentley coughed feebly. "Er—I—you don't mean now, do you, old fellow?" and his stammer was eloquently propitiating. He also seemed to have a covert eye for the door. In fact, it was a circumstance so patent that young Pompernel could not have failed to note it and make his own deductions. What these were was evidenced by a sudden stiffening of his neck and marked access of aggressiveness.

He advanced sharply, finger leveled, pistol-like.

"I mean right now—*now*, you understand, you impostor?" Pompernel's brows held the blackness of the thunder cloud. He heaved himself another yard, emboldened by the side shrinking of Bentley's knees. "No, you needn't run off, Dorothy"—this with a staying gesture, although the young lady had made no movement preliminary to flight. "This fellow and I will step across the street into the park for a little conference, and if he doesn't give a satisfactory account of himself—well, we'll see!" He heaved his shoulders in an offensive, aggressive manner that appeared greatly to disconcert the young man cowering before him, for he awkwardly lifted his elbow as though apprehensive of a blow and shrank backward.

"Oh, I'm not going to hit you here!" Young Pompernel grunted contempt and looked at Dorothy, as though to invite her smile for the situation. And she *was* smiling!

"Come!" said Pompernel imperatively, and caught the cloth of Bentley's sleeve and jerked it, though ineffectually.

"What you going to do?" It was a breathless whine of alarm, and this time Miss Morton was heartless enough to giggle. Young Pompernel leered at her and winked sympathy.

"You'll find out soon enough!" It sounded ominous, and was accompanied by a savage pull that had all the effectiveness of a yank upon an iron fire plug.

Then Bentley got slowly to his feet and stood doubled like a broken rye straw. "I—I've got an engagement," he faltered, and swallowed.

"You have," nodded Dorothy's cousin grimly—"but with me!" And he screwed a tighter grip upon Bentley's well pressed lapel.

Thus ignominiously he conducted him through the hall outside, being rather disappointed that there was present neither footman nor maid to witness the eviction.

"Get our hats, Dorothy!"—and Dorothy got them, the service seeming to afford her no little enlivenment.

"And my cane, Dorothy!" Pomper-

nel's voice hardened significantly. "I hope I won't need it, but I may!"

"Don't hurt him, Herbert!" she urged sweetly.

Herbert angled a very manlike scowl. "You never mind about that now." And tightening his grip upon Bentley, he summoned him to "come along." The injunction was accompanied by a slight menace with the cane.

"Don't you hit me!" It was almost a tremulous whimper, and Bentley shrank back against the balustrade that topped the stone steps without. "I'll come, but don't you hit me!"

It was a pitiable spectacle of funk, but it only incited a snicker from the unfeeling girl in the doorway. As for Pompernel, so far from moving his sympathies, it only seemed to stir him to greater severity with the hapless youth.

With an admonitory snarl, he shook his prisoner. At least he shook his coat. So far as Bentley's physical self was concerned, it remained as unaffected as the stone against which he leaned.

"Now you come along without any more trouble," Pompernel hissed, "or I'll break this cane over your head!"

Bentley gasped. "But what have I done, Mr. Pompernel?" he faltered. "Oh, don't shake me that way!" He coughed, stooping forward. "I'm weak-chested and can't stand any violence," he breathed.

"Oh, you can't, eh?" Pompernel laughed harshly and looked at Dorothy with a wink. "We'll see about that when we get over in the park—come along, you loafer!"

And this time Pompernel's pull yielded such unexpected result that he almost went down the steps backward. He took a fresh grip just as his prisoner essayed a muttered remonstrance:

"Say now, Mr. Pompernel, don't humiliate me before your cousin—please don't do that! I wouldn't, if it was *you*!"

"Oh, wouldn't you—you cheap skate pretender and hypocrite! Get a move on, or I'll—" Another swing of the stick.

"Oh, you needn't look at Miss Morton—she can't help you, even if she wanted to!" Indeed it would seem that this was only too true, for though Bentley's eyes

had rolled at her an appeal that it seemed would have touched a stone, she had turned away with every sign of heartless, convulsive laughter.

Thus it was that Mr. Pompernel's old college friend stumbled droopingly after him down the steps. He moved with obvious reluctance, voicing protest at every step and apparently stimulated only by the lead of Pompernel's hand and the menace of the cane. It was a spectacle that attracted interested and curious speculation, the more so as Pompernel looked particularly uncompromising and fierce in contrast to the captive he trailed, who, with frightened visage and hat askew above one ear, seemed wistful only that the earth might open and mercifully snatch him from some more frightful doom. Indeed, with shoulders hunched forward and legs doubled under him and yielding in a sprawling run at every yank from Pompernel's good right arm, it was a sorry sight.

"Where 're you going?" breathed the prisoner pantingly, as they entered the park and moved across the sward toward an unfrequented copse of trees. Then with shriller alarm: "Look-a-here, master, I want to know where you are taking me!"

"Just a nice quiet place." Pompernel's voice was composed but ominous.

At this his old college friend broke into renewed protestations, pulling back. Once he almost stopped.

"I don't want to go down there," he protested sulkily and with manifest alarm as they entered the umbrage of a rather isolated ravine. It was at the instant when Pompernel was hesitating before the shadowed solitude himself.

"And I ain't a-going," Bentley finished.

This decided Pompernel. Without a word he swung his cane and Bentley's reluctant feet responded. Yet he seemed on the verge of tears.

"You ain't got no right—" Excitement seemed to have loosened Bentley's grip upon his grammar. If he was conscious of it, however, the perversions of English pure and undefiled failed to induce that evidence of shame which would have been becoming in a student

of Princeton. On the contrary, he rolled the lapses from his tongue as something having the flavor of rare verbal titbits. "I say you ain't got no right to make me do what I don't want to do, and I'm going to call a policeman if you—"

"Shut up!" Pompernel snorted his contempt and pushed Bentley to a bench. "Sit down there!"

It was a light enough push, but singularly it almost sent his old college friend heels over head backward. Only with an awkward scramble did Bentley recover his balance.

"Now," exclaimed Pompernel sharply, and his finger came up with slow leveling at his prisoner, who blinked at it with an air of sully resignation to the inevitable. "Now, my fine fellow, give an account of yourself!"

"I—I—" Bentley merely produced a sickly smile.

"You told my mother and my cousin you were my most intimate friend, and that you were studying for the ministry with me; and you told them we were in the same classes. You *know* you're not in my classes!"

Bentley gulped.

"As soon as mother mentioned your name as 'Bentley' I knew you weren't on any of my class rollcalls. You're an impostor, that's what you are!"

Bentley cringed. "Oh, Mr. Pompernel, don't say that, sir!" He gloomed upward at the leafy arch and shook his head. "And I suppose you told your mother I was an impostor, didn't you, Mr. Pompernel? Oh, dear, what'll your dear mother be a-thinkin' of me, sir?" The contemplation seemed too much for him and he buried his face in his hands.

"No, I didn't tell her!" The announcement of the concession was made dramatically, yet Pompernel's tone lent an intimation that he had yet to be shown that he had not acted weakly and unwisely.

But the admission had a magically enlivening effect upon Bentley's spirits. With a cry, he lifted his head and seized Pompernel's hand.

"Oh, thank you for those kind words, sir!" and he squeezed and wrung the

hand with an energy that brought a yell from Pompernel and caused him to squirm to the points of his toes.

"Let go, you fool!" he gasped. "You're hurting my hand!" For a moment he held it limp, satisfied that a bone was broken. Bentley murmured contrite apology.

"But it was so kind of you not to tell on me, sir," he submitted humbly. "And my feelings always carry me away. I'm so—"

"Never mind about you!" sharply. "Now look here"—he stooped above him fiercely—"I want to know what's your little game, you Bentley, or whatever your name is. What do you know about me or Princeton, and what are you sneaking around trying to get acquainted with my folks for—eh? You tell me that or—I'll smash every bone in your miserable body—you understand? I ought to do it anyhow for all that ignorant put-on of yours about London, Ontario. Lot *you* know about London, Ontario—with your marble Battle House, costing millions and built by an old miser! My mother says there's no such hotel there—and she was there last summer. What are you trying to do—make a fool of me?" He shook his cane.

Bentley's eyes widened with innocent surprise.

"Did—did you mention *that* hotel to her?" He faltered the question in a voice that choked with something—perhaps humility. Young Pompernel reddened.

"Never you mind that! And you think London's a town of only two or three thousand, eh? A fat lot *you* know about it, you thick-headed fool!" Pompernel's language and temper were unusual for a divinity student. "Why, my mother says—" He broke off abruptly. "Say, are you laughing at me, you blamed smart Alex—eh?"

And young Mr. Pompernel, enraged, applied other epithets to the gentleman slumping into the depths of the bench. In the stress of his emotions he also applied a sharp stroke of his cane to Bentley's body.

It was evidently unexpected, for that

young man sat up smartly and fixed his hat. He stared at the cane lofting again. Then in a changed tone: "Why you little—"

What Bentley was going to say was lost even to himself, for, instead of expending energy upon further syllables, he was gravely occupied in snapping Pompernel's cane in three pieces across his knee. Then he covered Pompernel himself within the length of one elastic stride, and clutching him within the collar, shook him till his hat vaulted twenty feet away.

"What! You strike a man with a cane, you little bullying cad? Why, I wouldn't do that to a—why, even *you*!"

And in disgust Bentley flung him afar and dusted his palms. Then as Pompernel scrambled to his feet and started to bolt, snarling a vile epithet, he strode after him and laid him by the heels—or rather by the neck again. He lugged him back, fairly holding his toes above the earth.

"You—you're choking me!" Pompernel's eyes bulged as he wheezed. "Le' my feet down!"

A vicious kick at his captor's shins was the immediate reward of compliance with this seemingly reasonable request. Promptly his feet were jerked from under him, and he dropped at Bentley's feet, a trailing pendant of that gentleman's arm. For ten seconds Pompernel sat there upon the asphalt, his jaw moving wordlessly, the shock of concussion having bereft him of the breath of life. Then he uttered a howl of terror.

A twist of the arm above him reduced it to a gurgle.

"Dry up! I want to think."

With his right foot resting upon the edge of the bench, Bentley carefully lifted the faultless crease of his trousers at the knee, and with his hat pushed back for greater mental amplitude, frowningly concentrated his powers upon a problem of ethics.

It took quite a time, during which the wild-eyed youth pendulous from his arm struggled with a problem of his own:

Was he to escape with mere robbery,

or was this lonely spot to witness a darker tragedy? The fact that his pockets were already empty—cleaned out down to the cloth through some recent experiences—and that he was even temporarily minus watch, chain and tie pin, were sources of but dubious satisfaction under the circumstances. Would not their absence prove a matter of professional irritation to this Mr. Bentley, inducing impulsive reprisals?

But of deeper current than this swirl of apprehension was a certain indignation that his confidence had been imposed upon. He had accepted Bentley in good faith as being a timid, rabbitlike, harmless sort of person; and here he had turned out a wolf, a hyena, a roaring lion seeking whom he might devour.

Suddenly Bentley lifted his chin with a jerk of decision. He also lifted Pompernel, carelessly tossing him upon the bench. The act seemed to be to give his hands freedom in busying themselves with the lighting of a cigarette. Pompernel could not fail to note that both matchsafe and cigarette case were of gold, the latter resplendent with some complicated monogram of jewels. His heart sank, for these trifles bore eloquent testimony to the kind of spoils to which men of Bentley's kidney was accustomed.

"Now," puffing, "you sit there quietly, my son, until I get through with you!" With eyes fixing Pompernel intently, he inserted his hand in his waistcoat and withdrew a small knife.

A calflike bleat and shrinking answered the act.

"You—you do anything to me," howled the heir of the Pompernels, "and my mother'll have the law on you, you—you brute!"

"Reckon so?" The brute leered frightfully, rolling his tongue in horrible fashion. Pompernel could not know that the writhing was merely to demolish an expansive grin. Then he proceeded with the manicuring of a nail slightly defiled in the recent encounter. He studied Pompernel curiously. Then he said quietly:

"What do you suppose dear mother would say if she knew her precious dar-

ling hadn't been to Canada at all during these ten days, but had been right here in New York; and what would she say if she knew *where*?"

Bentley, still with grave fixity of gaze, slowly closed the knife and replaced it. Following this, he took a long, deliberative pull at his cigarette; then shot a blue funnel at the verdant arch overhead.

"Answer me!"

Pompernel couldn't. With jaw collapsed and head tilted forward, the best he could do was to eye the speaker with a wide-eyed horror that spectacles in no way tended to mitigate.

Bentley's nail daintily flicked his ash.

"And, furthermore, wouldn't mamma have been sending out a hurry call about her wandering boy at night if she had known that most of his time last year was spent in Atlantic City and Philadelphia instead of in college, and that a waiter named Rickey Macpherson mailed his letters from Princeton—eh?"

Again Bentley inhaled luxuriously.

Pompernel, on the contrary, was scarcely inhaling at all. His face had a chalky, morguelike hue.

"And say, wouldn't mamma scream with joy if she knew her angel child had never spent a cent on missionaries in his life, and that the thousand dollars recently given him for that purpose had been used for—"

Bentley paused, his eyes holding a tantalizing twinkle. He chuckled softly and selected a fresh cigarette with elaborate care. He rested his foot upon the bench beside Pompernel and his chin upon his hand and beamed with all-embracing wisdom. He even winked.

But Pompernel could not wink back. His eyes were past winking, the lids being locked in a wide distended paralysis. He swallowed heavily.

Bentley resumed: "I say, how would it strike mamma if she knew the thousand dollars had been used by her angel boy in doing the 'angel' role for Miss Tillie Tinkles in her near-to-nature sketchlet, 'The Purple Pup,' which met a cold frost in the tryout last week at Paterson, New Jersey—eh?" Bentley smiled engagingly. And the perfect smoke ring that he blew hung for an in-

stant, an evanescent halo, about Pompernel's pallid brow.

"And what?"—Bentley leaned closer—"what would she say to *these*?"

A sheaf of papers flashed before Pompernel's spectacles. Bentley slowly turned them, showing multiplication of the cryptic formula, "I. O. U." sometimes attended by other writing, and all bearing the signature, "Herbert Spencer Pompernel."

Suddenly they were gone, and from behind Bentley's back swung his other arm.

"And these *letters*!" It was a shout, fairly emptied into Pompernel's ear.

"Ach-h!" Pompernel snatched wildly.

But the papers were no longer there.

He fell backward with an expression of eloquent profanity.

"Quite so!" Bentley smiled appreciatively and replaced the contents of the blue envelope and buttoned it within his coat. Then he dropped beside Pompernel, and turning slightly from him as if to hint that he was no longer under surveillance or restraint, yawned expansively. With arms wide extended upon the back of the seat, and straw hat balanced forward upon his nose, Bentley stretched his legs out luxuriously with every indication of enjoying a well earned relaxation. In fact, his closed eyes and gentle smile expressed the peace of one who, with conscience clear, dismisses from mind the maddening crowd's ignoble strife and lies down to pleasant dreams.

Yet Pompernel made no effort to leave the spot. He leaned slightly forward, studying the other. Presently he began in a husky whine: "Say, you—er—Mr.—"

"Bentley," came promptly from under the hat; "my name's Bentley."

A gasp and a sudden straightening. "Say, not Mr. Tom Bentley?"

"Same."

"Oh, Lord!" And Pompernel fell backward in dismay. Not unknown to him was the prowess of the senior Senator's versatile son in everything athletic from polo to pugilism.

Yet a sudden recollection stirred him impulsively.

"But you aren't a Princeton man"—protestingly. "You were at Harv—"

"Forget it!" Bentley's lifted forefinger checked him. Then distinctly: "I *am* from Princeton—understand? Your old college chum. And we're just like brothers."

"But—"

"Pardon me!" The utterance was smoothly, languidly polite. "If I *am* to talk, I must request that I be not interrupted. I say, *if* I am to talk. Of course you may not desire to hear what I have to say; and if you do not, why—" Bentley appeared to lapse to slumber, but roused at the sound of an uneasy swallow from the other. "Oh, well, in that case, I—"

He merely clucked.

But the sound, to Pompernel, was as the cocking of a Winchester.

Forthwith he yielded sully assurances of his great desire to have speech from the gentleman under the hat; but these expressions bringing forth no response, his tone sharpened to one of alarm and pleading. Thereupon Bentley proceeded to talk. At the end of half an hour he was still talking.

Then he rose and stretched.

"And that's all, I guess. Only, I think you'd better get home now as soon as possible and explain your joy to your dear mother that your old college friend, Tom Bentley, has consented to act as your best man, and that you want the wedding arrangements to be left entirely to him. Tell her that your old chum will confer every day with her and—er—your fiancée." Bentley's smile was gracious, even bland. "But you must *not* go to her scowling like that. That would *never* do—she might think you unhappy about something. No, you must chirp up, and look—well—er—something like this." And Mr. Pompernel's old college chum gave an excellent imitation of the far-famed Cheshire cat.

But even this effulgence failed to lighten the sullen gloom of Mr. Pompernel's countenance. In fact, he shook his fist at Bentley, with appropriate accompanying comments and suggestions.

"You're just making a blame fool of me, that's what! I don't want to go on

with the wedding now; and I—I ain't going to, either."

"You'll do just what you're told to do!" His old college friend's face was thrust close, but its smile was gone—in fact, it looked ugly. "Let me hear of you opening your head to anybody, and I'll—I'll eat you alive! By George, I've half a mind to, anyhow!"

XX

"It—it's not fair!" howled Pompernel.

"What!" The ejaculation from Bentley fairly whipped the air. "You talk about things not being fair?" His glance seemed to wrap Pompernel from head to foot in blue lightnings. The spectacled youth shrank before his stride.

"You," exploded Bentley, "who have been only too willing to have your mother browbeat and drive into your arms a fresh, innocent young girl—your own cousin, too! Oh, I'm not talking about the gambling—nor a lot of other things, for that matter. I've no call to preach, heaven knows! But dammit, Pompernel, if I were—well, *you* know, like you—by George, before I'd ask an innocent girl to marry me, I'd go up to High Bridge and jump off—I would, I swear it!"

He snapped his fingers and the young man on the bench quailed. Bentley whirled away a circle of steps and back again.

"Why, you little beast, there's *no* excuse for you, though there is some for your mother, for she doesn't know you. No, sir! You're going through with this for your own sake as well as—" He broke off sharply. "What's that?" For out of Pompernel's sullen mutter came something savoring of a threat.

"I say," began the latter, sulkily, "I can just tell you one thing: if mother knew who you were, she wouldn't listen to anything you'd say!"

Bentley considered him with composure. "You mean because she hates the governor so? I see." His mouth twisted with grim amusement. "You're

a great thinker, Herby. Suppose you try that and see how grateful to you mamma will be for the Senator's latest newspaper having a Sunday feature stunt on 'Profligate Lives of the Young Sons of the Rich'—or some such merry rot—illustrated with facsimile reproduction of the—er—goods." His fingers lightly touched the outside of his coat pocket. "No, I hardly think—*hardly* think mother would thank you for getting her into that! Eh, what say?"

And Bentley stooped solicitously, but Pompernel had merely uttered some sullen murmur about libel and a suit for damages.

"Libel?" Bentley repeated the word slowly with the manner of one testing an unfamiliar brand of tea. "Libel—suit for damages?" His frowning concentration showed his difficulty in discovering a correlation between the two. "Oh," doubtfully, and yet with hopeful clearing of face, "I think I get you now; I believe I *do* see what you mean. Oh, yes," nodding brightly, "you mean you could sue the governor for libel—that it?"

"Why, of course you could sue!" The Senator's son smiled pleasant acquiescence. "Why, sure!" Bentley's tone held a suggestion of honest indignation for any proposition tending to controvert his old college friend's right in the matter under inquiry. "Anybody has a right to sue about anything—well, I should say! Of course it's expensive—oh, yes, frightfully so, if you're going to follow a thing along through all the courts, you know. Of course, in a libel suit, there is, to be sure, the little matter of showing that it *is* a libel!" Bentley brushed a bit of dust from the front of his coat, the action bringing into prominence a certain bulkiness in his pocket due to the presence of a thick blue envelope.

Pompernel's jaw abruptly came to rest and he squirmed somewhat uneasily. His old college friend ogled him in a pleasant, intimate way.

He continued: "And then, even if you do that, you know you must establish that it was malicious. And, oh, dear, you know these matters of intent and purpose are *so* hard to prove! But really"—he shrugged deprecatingly—"I

am so uninformed about such matters, I really ought not to speak of them. And *do* you know," cheerfully, "I rather think it's the same way with the governor. For you know—oh, well, he never bothers about things of that sort—why, he can't, you see—he hasn't time. You know all that is just part of the expected regular routine a great progressive political newspaper looks for. In fact, if the governor didn't have things of that sort, why, he would feel it was rather foolish paying Bannerman & Bilkem a twenty-thousand-a-year retainer to attend to the paper's legal matters. And it would be, wouldn't it?"

Then Bentley glanced casually at his watch and ejaculated the hour.

"My! Did you have any idea it was so late? Well, I declare! Now let's see—is there anything else?" Bentley's fingers gently beat upon the knuckles of his other hand, the while he held Pompernel in pleasant regard. Failing of inspiration from his hanging visage, he was apparently moved to introspection.

"Oh, yes—why, do you know, I came near forgetting! My goodness! Don't fail—*don't* fail this afternoon to send an invitation to Senator and Mrs. Bentley, at Yonkers, to be present at your wedding. And perhaps—yes, I think I would send along with it a nice little autograph letter, making it a sort of personal matter and appeal—you understand—that they be present at the ceremony. You want to explain your mother's great pain and sorrow that unscrupulous enemies have made it seem that she cherished other sentiments than those of *warmest* admiration and esteem for Senator Bentley. And make it clear, my dear Herbert, that it is your dear mother's wish that he and Mrs. Bentley be *sure* to be present in order to silence forever the calumnious and malicious tongues that have— But there, you'd better let me write it down for you!"

Forthwith he whipped out an envelope and wrote, dropping beside Pompernel for the purpose, and seemingly unmindful of that gentleman's detached interest in the service he was rendering, pointedly emphasized by a mumble of unlovely things, including a frankly expressed

yearning that Mr. Bentley should repair to a place whose fixity, and even existence, is more or less controversial among theologians.

Bentley nodded agreeably as he wrote, never interrupting the thread of the other's thought, and only venturing to speak when his old college friend paused for breath.

"I see," he said blandly. "Now get this all nicely copied and signed and have ready to enclose with an invitation. You can give it to me tonight. You see, I'll probably be up soon after dinner in order to—in order to go over some matters about the ceremony—things I want to talk over with Do—with your cousin, you know."

And he added, abstractedly rather than carelessly: "You may come in for a little while if you like."

XXI

MISS KITTY BLANDER, of the New York bar, stunningly habited in a new tailored miracle of golden brown, strolled up the Avenue with an air of graceful languor. Crowning her sunny head was a gloriously expensive, perfect dream of a picture hat, flanked by a sheaf of golden brown ostrich plumes that shaded to a canary yellow. There was in her soul peace—the peace that comes only to the woman who knows that her outward investment is the mold of art, with a concomitant triumph of color scheme from heels to head that is the symphonized achievement of an artist's brain.

Miss Blander was en route to the meeting of the Metaphysical Circle. She was a full hour ahead of time, but this was an incident deliberate and purposeful. For she wanted to see and talk with Emile.

It had occurred to her that the good-looking chauffeur, whose expert qualifications were Maria Pompernel's boast and pride, might possess latent qualifications of another sort to which it might be worth giving a professional eye.

Miss Blander, as a member of the bar, deplored the limping conservatism of the State's legislators that still insisted upon

a "corespondent" as a *sine qua non* in successful prosecution of divorce proceedings. In her opinion, this archaic enactment of the gentlemen at Albany did not square with their private, personal, secret convictions—for most of them, she knew, were married men. Therefore, to her mind, if one considered the thing logically, these men were not consistent—not honest with themselves—in lending themselves to the placing of obstructions athwart the progress of human liberty and the pursuit of happiness. These gentlemen never seemed to consider that corespondents were not to be found upon every bush; and Miss Blander had only contempt for impractical legislation that failed to take into account the relation of supply to demand.

How, for instance—Miss Blander asked herself the question with grim humor—was she to find a corespondent to name in connection with divorce proceedings against a poor, unattractive thing like Maria Pompernel?

Then all at once hope was born of a sudden inspiration. Emile!

And now, as she entered the last block, she quickened her progress. Opportunity was with her, for there before the Pompernel mansion was the chauffeur himself, lending some supererogatory polishings to an already shining, spick and span six-cylinder marvel anchored beside the curb.

"Why, Emile, I didn't know you had a new car!"

No, Emile explained, they had not bought a new car. This car—his gesture indicated it with pride—belonged to "Meester Bentley."

"Bentley?" Miss Blander looked pleasantly inquiring.

Emile, deferring to the dubitable fact of the lady's relationship to the family, yielded the further information that this was the young gentleman—Mr. Herbert's great friend from Princeton—who had hurried back from his home out in "Meechegan," in order to be present at the wedding.

"Ah, indeed!" Miss Blander was obviously charmed at this instance of devotion on the part of one of whom she had never heard before, especially as she

had privately held the conviction that the younger Mr. Pompemel never had made a friend in all his life.

Therefore, she was moved to stimulate Emile to further revelations of Mr. Bentley's attachment. She gathered the knowledge that Mr. Bentley had enthusiastically taken upon himself attention to all those troublesome details which intending benedicks are commonly supposed to be incapacitated to assume.

"And you don't mean to say he's arranged with the Bishop?" And it must be said of Miss Blander that her amazement was perfectly genuine. "Why, how on earth?"

For she knew that of late years the Bishop had refused everyone uniformly and with unblushing frankness. "How *could* he manage the Bishop?" Miss Blander was puzzled.

As for the worthy Bishop, the influence which had constrained him was known only to himself and Bentley. True enough, he had been slow to move in the matter at first. "Pooh, pooh, sir! Most ridiculous preposition I ever heard of! Perfectly preposterous, I tell you, to ask such a thing!"

Yet the fact remains that in that memorable interview, after avowing for the twentieth time that nothing could induce him to lend himself to "such a monstrous absurdity," the Right Reverend Bishop's hands at length went up in the air in a gesture of surrender. After which he lay back in his favorite chair and chuckled and shook till he got to coughing, his full, genial jowls waxing fuller and more genial, and redder, withal, than ever.

For what is one to do—even though a bishop—in the face of an insistent matter-of-life-and-death urging on the part of a young scapegrace of whom one is inordinately fond, not only for his own sake but because he happens to be your nephew and named for you?

"And is Mr. Bentley inside?"

Emile, beguiled again into admissions, yielded the information that Mr. Bentley was—that in fact, he was there every day, not once but several times.

From laudation of Mr. Bentley, it

was an easy glide to a eulogy upon the car—the more so as the chauffeur was here able to spread himself with honest fervor. It appeared that it had been his privilege to drive them upon several occasions.

"Them?" Miss Blander queried innocently.

"*Mais oui, madame!* Always when Meester Bentley takes out—" Emile abruptly busied himself with a yellow splash upon the shining mudguard. It came to him suddenly that Miss Blander was exercising herself in the great American game of pumping. Why? He could see that the lady was anxiously awaiting the completion of his sentence.

"One of the ladies, madame," Emile finished.

Madame's eyes flashed an instant. Then she nodded carelessly.

"Oh, I see!"

And Miss Blander was pricked with the conviction that she *did* see something. She had been fishing in shallow waters, and here unexpectedly upon her line had come a jerk—from what? And her lashes curtained her eyes as she lightly lifted a bit of lint from her skirt.

"It's a funny world, isn't it, Emile?" she hazarded softly.

She moved a step nearer.

"Have you noticed any—I mean, does he seem *very* fond of her, Emile?"

Only by a powerful effort did Miss Blander restrain her voice from splintering into a shrill and eager tremolo. Not for worlds would she blight by unseemly haste the unfolding blossom of what might prove a delicious bit of scandal.

Emile smiled. He knew quite well that the lady meant the young made-moiselle.

"Ah, madame, I nevaire see anything like this—his devotion! He send her flowers every day, and he talk about nothing *else* when we are together. And every day when he come, *ze* first thing when she come in he stoop over and kiss her on *ze*—"

Emile stooped over himself, being taken with a slight coughing.

"Yes?" asked Miss Blander eagerly. "He kisses her on—"

"Ze hand, madame." And Emile addressed his lips to the tips of his slender fingers, seeming to waft a salute to the spirits of the air.

"Oh!" The lady's face contracted. "Is *that* all?"

"Ah, but, madame, Meester Bentley, he love her like his own"—Emile rolled his eyes eloquently—"his own mother!"

Miss Blander stared. "You don't mean Dorothy?"

Emile gestured shocked surprise. "*Non, non, madame.* I speak of Meeses Pompernel."

"Oh!" Miss Blander swayed slightly and her fingers touched her throat. She swallowed noiselessly.

"Madame surely jests about ze young mademoiselle—is it not?" Emile advanced earnestly. "Why, madame, eet seem to me Meester Bentley nevaire think of her, nevaire—except he try, oh, so hard, to be gallant to ze fiancée of his dear friend. But, Meeses Pompernel—ah, madame, that is different!"

And he eyed Miss Blander with a mournful, significant fixity. Never a doubt was there in his mind that Miss Blander had been set on him by Mrs. Pompernel herself. He understood. Mrs. Pompernel was growing suspicious of Mr. Bentley's warm professions of regard for the mother of his old friend and would like to plumb his motives.

"Are—are you sure, Emile?" Miss Blander's active legal mind had been casting far in advance. "You think then it isn't Dorothy he's after—I mean, that he is doing all this for Maria—I mean, Mrs. Pompernel?"

Emile shifted a step nearer, glancing impressively at the chimneys above. "*Madame,*" he breathed, "*l'amour et la fumée ne peuvent se cacher!* Only last night, after he leave here—and he not see Meeses Pompernel, only mademoiselle—he have me drive him miles and miles t'rough ze park, and he tell me—me, Emile, all he feel! He say to me, 'Ah, Emile, if it were only that she were not married now!' and he strike his breast—so!"

Here the chauffeur abruptly startled Miss Blander by an elaborate sweep of

his arm toward the car. His voice lifted clearly:

"Yes, madame is right; it *is* a French car. See ze adjustment of ze magneto for self-starting—yes, madame speaks truth, eet *is* painful for ladies to do ze cranking. And may I show madame here—" And Emile threw open the hood and volubly directed attention to the engine.

Miss Blander was instantly on the qui vive, and with an air of interest shifted to his side so that she glimpsed sidewise the approach of Mrs. Van Stuphem and Mrs. Prinder, first of the vanguard for the meeting of the Metaphysical Circle. In a moment they came abreast.

Miss Blander was saying: "No, Emile, as I was saying, if I get a car it will be a limousine, because— Oh, how do you do, dear Mrs. Prinder? . . . Yes, quite well—oh, I always am! . . . Yes, as you say, 'still looking' at cars. And that reminds me: do you know, a little while ago, Marcia, I was just sure I saw your motor across the Plaza with Mr. Prinder, going into the park. . . . No, dear, I know it wasn't you—that's where the joke on me comes in!" Miss Blander's innocent eyes held her friend in smiling regard. "Who do you suppose it was? But, oh, I'm almost *sure* you would guess in a minute. As they came under my window at the hotel, I saw my mistake—I saw it was that secretary of Mr. Prinder's—let me see, what *is* her name?" Her brow puckered musingly as her gloved finger pressed her lip. "I ought *surely* remember, because it was only last week your husband introduced her to me one night at the roof garden. Oh, yes"—with a flash—"I know—Miss Fortesque!" Miss Blander's face had in it the pleased light of a child's. "She *is* awfully pretty, don't you think? Well," with a dainty *moue*, "you and I were pretty *once*, Marcia." Here her glance seemed to make exact inventory of Mrs. Prinder's *present* features, and Miss Blander's frank eyes did not attempt to repress a twinkle as her teeth smilingly dragged at her lip. "I remember, when I was just a little girl and you were quite a young lady, I used to

think you so pretty. Well, dear, we must just try to take comfort in the old saying, 'Every dog has his day.' "

And with a light laugh, Miss Blander turned abruptly from Mrs. Prinder, addressing herself with grave sweetness to Mrs. Van Stuphem. That lady shrank visibly.

"Such a becoming suit you have, Helen! . . . Oh, yes, indeed I *do* think so. Do you still cling to your little dress-maker down in Eleventh Street? Oh, dear, why can't I be economical like that?"

With pretty plaintiveness, Miss Blander seemed to refer the inquiry impartially between the two ladies.

"Oh, *must* you go in, you think? Well, I suppose it is almost time. I'll be in myself in just a moment—I must ask Emile a few more questions."

Then, as the threshold swallowed them, she turned. "Well, Emile," she said with light gurgle, "let's see—where were we? Oh, yes, you were about to tell me why you were sure Mr. Bentley loves Maria. Hurry, Emile; the rest of them will be coming in a few minutes; those two old gossips always arrive first because they're afraid the others will talk about them."

Emile nodded. "Perhaps I better tell madame first about ze place they meet."

"Place they meet—yes!" eagerly.

"Down in ze—" He shrugged embarrassedly and coughed. "But I don't think madame know *where* I mean if I mention—madame, she *nevaire* was in such a place, and—"

"Tell me!" she said breathlessly. From her bag Miss Blander whipped a tiny notebook and pencil.

"They meet down in ze street behind ze Trinity Churchyard—what you call—oh, I remember—Washington Street."

"Emile!" Miss Blander blinked. "Not Washington Street—you can't mean that!" Once, coming from a boat pier, she had passed the mouth of Washington Street and had glimpsed its ragged perspective. That was enough.

"Go on," she said a little hoarsely, and her pencil traveled rapidly, leaving a lengthening trail of stenographic markings.

"Why, madame, it was when they meet there that he give her ze twenty thousand dollar—"

"Wait a minute," swallowing as she wrote. "Twenty thousand dol—" Miss Blander's gloved fingers trembled a little.

"*Oui, madame*; that was what Mr. Bentley pay for ze rug because he not bear for madame to be disappoint!"

"Rug! For *that* thing?" Miss Blander grimaced, evincing her own opinion of Mr. Bentley's infatuation. She had seen the rug!

"Ah, but Meeses Pompernel, she not know that he pay so much for it. But I know, madame, because his man Spreeg, he tell me all about."

Miss Blander's mouth contracted grimly as she noted the witness.

"Can you get this man Spriggs to see me at my office?" she demanded in mechanical professional voice.

"*Certainement*," eagerly. "He tell you also that Mr. Bentley pay for ze black cat, too—thirty dollaire!"

"Wha-a-t!" She remembered the black cat—she carried a souvenir of it under her glove.

"Go on, Emile," her voice hardening; "tell me *all* you know!"

And Emile did—and more.

XXII

In the Pompernel drawing room the Persian rug held the floor.

At least, it held the floor of the low dais or platform at the further end just before the door into the library. Mrs. Pompernel had felt that some such structure was necessary to the proper display of her treasure, and it would also serve as a distinguished vantage point from which she would read her paper.

But until she came to the point of the twenty-ninth page, where she referred to Oriental symbolism, it was her purpose not to refer to her acquisition. Then she would spring it on them.

Meantime there it lay, radiating like a dull opalescent jewel, but so far all unnoticed amid the buzzing and gossiping attending the assembly of the Metaphys-

ical Circle. Unnoticed, that is, save by Miss Kitty Blander, who with many flashing smiles of recognition and gracious interchanges gradually worked her way to the point where lay the silken shine. The rug held for her a freshened interest.

So, having reached it at last, she lifted her bronze slipper and incontinently stepped thereon. Her dainty heels were curious to sense under them the feel of twenty thousand dollars.

It was just at this instant that Mrs. Pompernel entered from the library behind. With her was Mr. Pompernel.

Miss Blander, turning, purred soft greetings. She added hastily: "You see I'm examining your perfectly lovely rug, dear." Then with effusion: "Where on earth did you get it?"

She smiled brightly at Mr. Pompernel, and was not surprised when he did not look at her. She knew he didn't dare.

Nor did Mrs. Pompernel reply to her greeting and questions. She appeared abstracted, standing beside the dais, her lorgnette sweeping the swarming hive before her.

"I don't see her now," she murmured; "but she is here—or was just now; and I want to tell you I consider it abominable effrontery."

Miss Blander's attention leaped. It seemed that the comment was an aside to her.

"Who is it, dear?" She inclined slightly from her elevation, her glance striving to follow Mrs. Pompernel's lorgnette. Then she whispered: "Oh, do you mean Lillie Devereau? Yes, *isn't* it brazen of her to come out so soon after her divorce scandal? Did you *ever* see anything to beat it?" And Miss Blander sniffed. "You know, my dear Maria, I was poor Carroll Devereau's attorney in his suit, and, my dear child, we just had a walkover—a perfect walkover—with the evidence I gathered; I even went on the stand myself. And it seemed so hopeless at first! But now," triumphantly, "she can't marry again in this State."

Mrs. Pompernel dropped her lorgnette and turned to her husband.

"Well, I don't see her now, and I hope

I *won't* see her, for I don't want to have to speak to her. It's simply *insolent* of her to come here."

"Shameless audacity, I call it!" Miss Blander's tone was harsh with indignation. "I never can understand why people will go where they are not wanted."

Mr. Pompernel stroked a whisker, venturing to murmur something about the loneliness of hotel life.

"Loneliness!" echoed his wife, wheeling upon him. "Do you think *that* woman could be lonely in a hotel? It's impossible!"

Miss Blander murmured endorsement. "She's right there, Jasper. I know how that is myself, living as I do in a hotel. Why, I never have—"

"And *why* is she able to live at a hotel on the Plaza?" Mrs. Pompernel impaled her husband with a scornful glance. "Do you know why?"

Evidently Mr. Pompernel didn't. Still stroking his whiskers, the little man rolled his eye at a fresco in the ceiling, seeking the lost clue.

"The shameless profit of the divorce court, the spoil of disrupted homes—that's where she gets her money!" And Mrs. Pompernel's lip quivered.

"I think, Maria dear, you're mistaken about Lillie's resources." Miss Blander submitted it sweetly. "The court never gave her one thing—I saw to that! And she isn't in a hotel on the Plaza, you know, but over on the—"

But just here Simmons obtruded.

"Yes, I sent for you," said Mrs. Pompernel, and there was some sharp inquiry about an extension music rack that was wanted for holding her manuscript while she read.

Simmons looked surprised. He stared; then his apoplectic visage grew purple.

"Somebody's moved it!" he wheezed indignantly. "It's that new man, Phillips. Why, I put it there with my own hands when I spread the rug, ma'am. I stepped up there with the rack and placed it right on the front edge of the rug."

"Well, you see it's not there, and there's no time to look for it; I've got to begin."

Miss Blander broke in: "My dear, do you mean this? Isn't this the thing you mean?" Her hand touched the iron extension rack beside her. "My dear Maria, *why* don't you have glasses fitted? You know, dear, at your age"—with honeyed solicitousness and a glance at Mr. Pompernel—"you are taking great risks straining your eyes. Why, this thing is in *perfectly* plain view."

Perhaps Mrs. Pompernel was miffed at the reference to her age. Miss Blander surmised as much, for the president of the Metaphysical Circle deigned no reply, but with elastic smile moved down in front of the dais and addressed preliminary words of greeting and explanation to her guests. Following her invitation that they draw chairs nearer, there was immediately a rustling migration to points of vantage close to the front.

Miss Kitty Blander stepped down to the left and selected the nearest chair. She angled it to face both dais and room.

A pale girl with hollow eyes came directly toward her and sank into the adjoining seat.

"My dear Miss Blander, I'm going to sit by you if you don't mind. Somehow," with sweet unction, "I feel so much safer if I'm sitting by you."

Miss Blander faced her with smiling flash of teeth.

"How perfectly dear of you to say so! Mrs. Devereau, isn't it? So glad to meet you again! Mrs. Pompernel—my cousin, you know—was just talking about you to me. I was hoping you would come, but she said she *hardly* thought it likely."

Miss Blander's lids dropped with purposeful significance.

Mrs. Devereau eyed her composedly. "Did she? Odd, when that is precisely what she assured me about *you* when she telephoned this morning urging me to come." The lady laughed gently. "So I guess you've got that wrong, haven't you? Or don't you mind such things? That reminds me of something *so* clever my counsel said about you after the trial—I must tell you. You're sure you won't be offended?"

"Why, my dear, how could one take

offense at anything *you* might say?" Here Miss Blander nodded brightly to an acquaintance, and then to another. Her attention seemed to come back absently to the lady by her. "I beg your pardon; you were going to say—" She smoothed her lips inquiringly, bowing again elsewhere. Then she faced Mrs. Devereau with a little apologetic shift and an air that implied she *would* try to give her attention now.

"Why, Mr. Hutchins said your success was due to your liberal construction of the law."

"Yes?" Miss Blander's head perked interestedly.

"Yes; he said your professional construction of the law was only exceeded in liberality by your private construction of the decalogue."

Miss Blander's head inclined slightly as though in response to a compliment.

"Decalogue? That's the ten commandments, isn't it?"

Mrs. Devereau admitted that it was.

"I think, though, he was referring more particularly to the *ninth*."

"Oh, indeed!" Miss Blander seemed trying to remember what the ninth was.

"Though he *was* telling me about Clyde Mastern, who killed himself last year after you had his wife divorce him. He said such a queer thing; he said he wondered if you ever think of it in the lonely watches of the night."

"The night?" Miss Blander stared, then caroled joyously. "Why, my dear child, if you only knew how soundly I sleep at night and what a perfectly lovely mattress I have, you'd know I never think of anything after I touch my little downy cot. The *idea*! How silly of Billy Hutchins!" And Miss Blander bowed to another acquaintance.

"But what has poor Clyde Mastern's suicide to do with me and the decalogue?" she asked. "You don't know *how* you've roused my curiosity." She faced Mrs. Devereau expectantly.

That lady responded to a glance across the room and rose. Besides, Mrs. Pompernel, manuscript in hand, was picking her way smilingly among the chairs and moving toward the elevation covered by

the antique rug. Voices were subsiding to a hush of expectancy.

Young Mrs. Devereau, poised for flight, bent for a parting hiss:

"My dear Miss Blander, I supposed *you* would know. I just did know enough myself to understand Mr. Hutchins. When I was a little girl, I managed to learn the commandments that far—I mean through the *sixth*!"

And with a low laugh she would have fled, but Miss Blander's hand detained her gently.

"So bad, dear," she cooed sympathetically, "that you didn't go one step further and learn the next." Miss Blander sighed. "Seven is a magic number, you know; it might have *so* changed your life. Must you go?"—sweetly. "Good-bye, dear!"

XXIII

MRS. POMPERNEL stepped upon the dais and placed her thick sheaf of papers upon the sloping shelf of the music rack. She was gratified to discover that Simmons had found it. Then she faced the long room, pleasantly conscious of the feel of the precious rug under foot and still more pleasantly conscious of the distinguished prominence her new black lace gown must be achieving with the advantage of isolation and her eminence above the seated throng.

Mrs. Pompernel was not surprised that a whispered buzz continued as she stood there. She had expected it. Therefore she stood with grave smiling dignity, waiting, willing to indulge them with a moment's time for comment upon her appearance. Then she parted her lips and inflected the Jovian brows as a preliminary signal to them that she was about to speak.

"My dear friends of the Metaphysical Circle!"

Mrs. Pompernel pronounced this slowly and in the low, deep, resonant chest tones that she had practised that morning in the bathroom. "If you will kindly let me have your attention a few minutes"—the brows cut a smiling arc from left to right—"I will endeavor to

present to you the summary of my investigations and conclusions upon the subject of 'Our Metaphysical Intimations of Karma.'"

Mrs. Pompernel stepped back an inch or two and leveled her lorgnette at the first page on the music rack. A louder buzz of conversation swelled.

Mrs. Pompernel looked up and coughed.

But the conversational hum strengthened. Suddenly a young lady stood up in the row just to the right of the dais.

"Madeline," she called to the far end of the room, "you come down here and sit by me before she begins. Hurry—bring your chair." Then she imparted in general confidence to those about her. "I'm just *dying* to see her ring!"

Mrs. Pompernel looked toward her significantly and frowned a little. Then she coughed again, looking at the room generally.

"The theosophic concept of the undifferentiated absolute—"

Mrs. Pompernel paused. Really, one could scarcely blame her. Two ladies had stopped right in front of the dais and were comparing their relative experiences in the hospital incidental to the removal of the treacherous appendix.

"Yes, *think* of it, my dear, I walked to the table myself! Dr. Hackett said himself he never—How's that?"

"Why, I don't know; I was just thinking we might as well sit down as stand. I've so much I want to tell you, and I don't think Mrs. Pompernel can be ready to begin yet."

"I *am* ready!" The lady on the dais straightened a little stiffly. "I *have* begun, Mrs. Arnold!"

And raising her voice, she proceeded steadily down the page before her, until young Mrs. Willets immediately in front of her raised her voice to the lady in the second chair:

"Evelyn, have you been upstairs to see Dorothy's trousseau? . . . Oh, yes, and all laid out. You *must* go up! . . . How's that? . . . I believe you. That's just what my husband thinks; he was saying last night that a girl like Dorothy Morton certainly deserved something better than Herbert Pompernel—little

sneaking cad, *he* called him. . . . What's that, Evelyn?" A gasp. "You don't mean it?"

"Yes," leaning across eagerly, "mamma knows, and she says Dorothy is paying for every shred herself, every stitch! Why, do you know," breathlessly, "that child has never even had a ring from him—never even so much as a flower!"

The lady upon the dais interjected here:

"Well, what do you two expect—what could you expect of him, with such a mother? I'm *never* surprised at any petty meanness from Maria Pompernel. As Mrs. Van Stuphem was saying just now—" And she whispered to the foregrounding heads.

The lady upon the dais had paused, glaring down from behind a bosom heaving with mortification and fury. But the hand that held the lorgnette trembled, and after one burning, shriveling radiation through the lenses, she dropped it. Very pale, Mrs. Pompernel turned upon those about her a bitter smile suggestive of what they were permitting her to endure. Then from pallor, her face changed in hue to turkey red, the drawn muscles becoming turgid with the blood of rage.

For there at her left, almost within touching distance, was the one woman she hated most—Kitty Blander. The creature *had* stayed then, after all! Moreover, with a tiny square of handkerchief pressed to her lips, she was facing her neighbor and laughing—laughing at *her*, of course!

Mrs. Pompernel's eye gleamed, and with resolution she gathered her papers. She faced Miss Blander an instant with a significant sweeping glance that she knew no one could fail to identify as one of contemptuous deprecation. She was *glad* to find something to focus upon. Besides, unquestionably the assemblage was shaping its conduct by Kitty Blander's example—that, of course, was what Kitty Blander wanted; *she* was to blame for it all. Manuscript in hand, she moved with dignity to the end of the rug and dais furthest from Miss Blander, yet with a slow lingering backward glance that she knew no one else could

mistake, though it might fail to penetrate the insensitive epidermis of her enemy.

And just here young Mrs. Blakesley got up, and there was a sudden subduing of conversational hum. Mrs. Blakesley was looking at her watch.

"I move"—she spoke up clearly and with a radiant encircling smile—"that we appoint a committee to ask Mrs. Pompernel to begin. I've got a lot of shopping yet to do!"

"Second the motion!" ejaculated several, voicing at the same time that wholesome emancipation from parliamentary red tape that woman only has had the courage to initiate.

"My dear friends"—Mrs. Pompernel spoke reproachfully, yet with summons of the elastic smile—"believe me, I shall be only too glad to continue if it is your desire." She turned to her paper. "H'm—I *believe* I had just submitted the proposition that if we would become as one with the Logos and attain the Nirvanic stage, we must subdue all passion, all physical emotion. I will now proceed to develop this argument."

"One thing we *do* know," broke in Miss Blander: "whatever it is, it will be as long as all out-doors—Maria is *so* prolix!"

"Oh, I don't think so," came prompt contradiction from Mrs. Devereau. "I *do* think Mrs. Pompernel's club papers are perfectly delightful!"

"Thank you, my dear!" came gratefully from the dais. "I think appreciation of a club paper is proportioned to the capacity of the listener sometimes; the fault does not always lie with the one whose task it is to read it." *This* was plain enough, and for all of them, she thought. It should rasp more than Kitty Blander, despite its lubrication with courteous inflection. "If now, I may have your attention—" And raising her voice she proceeded:

"As Plato and Socrates long ago pointed out, we cannot even name that of which we know nothing."

"Oh, no," ejaculated a scornful voice to her right, "I don't believe Maria Pompernel knows any more about theosophy than the rest of us. She gets it

all out of the encyclopedia—Kitty Blander told me so; and—”

Another voice interjected: “Well, anyhow, I wish she would go on; I *wish* she would!”

“So do I,” came in a general chorus.

Mrs. Pompernel felt mollified. “Thank you, my friends.” Then turning to the right. “I’m *sorry* if there are those here whom I am boring; I’m *sorry—so sorry*,” straightening her neck, “I assure you all I have no desire—”

“Kitty,” came from the left, “why don’t you see what’s the matter? See if *you* can’t get her to go ahead.”

“My *dear* Mrs. Van Dyne,” responded Miss Blander, “when did you ever know a woman who wanted to hear another woman read a club paper—unless it happened to be her own?” She smilingly included others in the question. “You know *I’m* outspoken about such things. *You* know yourself, my dear, we’d all rather talk than hear Maria read; why hurry the evil hour?”

Out of a gentle wave of protest, assent and laughter, rose the shrill treble of old Mrs. J. Firman Mills:

“Well, we’ve *got* to hear her sooner or later.”

“I *want* to hear her!” And Mrs. Devereau looked at Miss Blander.

“So do I,” came from other voices.

Mrs. Pompernel summoned her own voice under control. “I am afraid,” huskily, “that—”

“Now, let’s all get quieter,” suggested someone. “Perhaps that’s it; she’s waiting for us to subside in here. Then I’m afraid—I *am* afraid perhaps she’s heard some of our comments.”

Mrs. Pompernel’s lip curled bitterly. “I don’t see how, unless I were deaf, I—”

“Really,” cut in the same voice, “we’re all so accustomed to talking about Maria, we forget when we’re in our own house, and—”

“I wonder if she’s going to give us any tea?” came from a heavily upholstered lady in the corner.

“I’m sure she will, Mrs. Buffer. And a cracker or two as well, if we will only keep quiet a while.”

There was a laugh, and the murmur subsided.

“*Now*, she’ll know we’re ready,” said Mrs. Blakesley.

But out of the hush came Miss Blander’s loud whisper to her neighbor:

“In my opinion, Maria would be only too glad to get out of reading, because I don’t believe she can manage the big words. I think she’s bit off more than she can chew.”

“*So* coarse!” Mrs. Devereau murmured it behind her.

But Mrs. Pompernel’s spirit was fired.

“I think,” with an ironic smile at Miss Blander, “I may manage to get through the words if Miss Blander will aid me occasionally.”

She bent her attention to the paper, holding it a little closer, for her hands were trembling. She would go through every word now if it killed her!

She raised her voice: “As Mrs. Besant tells us, the Nirvanic consciousness is existence raised to a vividness and intensity inconceivable to those who know only the life of the senses and the mind.”

Here she allowed her eye to turn significantly toward Miss Blander, but that lady was in the midst of an interesting narration about a dinner she had attended last week at Newport.

“The most *original* function we’ve had since Mrs. Chudleigh Pierpont’s tramp banquet two years ago. That was lovely, but *this*—my dear, you’d never guess it, so I’ll tell you. All the guests were divorced—husbands and former wives, and wives and former husbands. And when it came to dinner, every man took out his former wife!” And Miss Blander straightened impressively.

“Oh!” came a breathless exclamation, and there were those of other varieties.

“How perfectly delightful and *chic*! And you were there, Kitty?” enviously.

“I helped receive,” proudly; “most of them were my clients, don’t you know. And, oh, girls,” leaning forward so that her hat came in mild collision with two others, “Robbie Fairplay took out Neva Finley—his wife last year, don’t you know—and he sat between her and Polly Estabrook—Mrs. Fowler Esta-

brook that is now, you remember, but who was *his* wife year before last. And he talked to her all the evening; there's no telling *what* may come of it. Oh, it was all just too lovely for anything!"

"Beautiful!" sighed the others.

Mrs. Pompernel had allowed the hands holding the manuscript to fall, while she stood, half turned toward Miss Blander, her pose making it conspicuous that she was waiting till that lady had done. But she saw that in doing so she was placing herself at a disadvantage. Miss Blander had no intention of being done, and her example was again demoralizing the room.

With sudden grim resolution, she moved back to the music rack and with stentorian voice resumed her reading, pronouncing every word emphatically and literally hurling it into the noisy tide about her. There were some there who wanted to hear her, and they should! Besides, she was *not* going to be humiliated again in her own home by *that woman!*

Yet, despite her effort at concentration, there broke upon her hearing wave after wave of conversation—ripples of ejaculation and laughter and the heavy surf of ponderous discussions that engaged the graver matrons.

"Oh, so do I! I feel *so* sorry for the poor child—marrying that detestable little toad—ugh! And to think that the wedding is only two days off and—" . . . "They say Billy spent his whole summer trailing one of those near-edge women up at the Pier, and so Lucy's mother finally told him—" . . . "*Such* a frightful cold! As Jack says, a summer cold is harder to break up than a poker game; and so—" . . . "Of course! Don't I know that? Maria's doing it all; she's making Dorothy marry Herbert, just so they can keep the poor child's little dribble of money in the family. Yes, as you say, Mrs. Prinder, she has probably scared the poor thing into it." . . . "And he has been perfectly horrid now for a year about every cent I spend. If I want a new car, it's, 'Wait till next year; we can't afford it now.' He even raised a row about my new hat trunk, my dear, and *now*, to cap the climax, he has ac-

tually pawned—no, that isn't what you call it—has actually *mortgaged* the very roof over my head!" . . . "Well, I suppose it's quite a comedown for Allie; there's a lot of difference between a ten-thousand-a-season cottage at Newport and a two-thousand-a-year apartment over on Riverside. But it comes of having a husband who *will* not let the market alone! As John so often says, the love of money is the root—"

Mrs. Pompernel turned a page, projecting her voice at the ceiling:

"We come now, my friends, to the consideration of the fundamental verity that the Absolute One is the Causeless Cause and the Rootless Root of all."

Here young Mrs. Willets sprang up with a cry of greeting to a newcomer.

"And sit right here between Grace and me—no, you won't crowd us at all. No, dear, I think that armchair is reserved for Mrs. Pompernel. You know," laughingly, "she needs plenty of unobtrusive space about her when she sits down."

The newcomer was purling eager exchanges with her friends:

"And I'm so delighted I got here before Mrs. Pompernel began her paper—I was *so* afraid I'd be late. I don't want to miss a *word* of it. Oh, Evelyn, what a perfectly *darling* hat! Let me see it behind, dear. Oh, *do* you like this alpine? Why, my dear child, I just got so discouraged, I *had* to take this. Say, when is Mrs. Pompernel going to begin?"

For response, Mrs. Pompernel tremulously turned a page.

"And *that*," she screamed from her text, "is the question neoplatonism has sent sounding down the ages, and which I will now proceed to answer."

"Oh, dear!" Mrs. Van Stuphem openly swallowed a yawn. "I don't believe I *ever* found anything so tedious in my life. I can't imagine what's the matter with Maria."

Mrs. Pompernel staggered backward, almost falling from her elevation. This, from her best friend, was a blow indeed.

"Oh!" she gasped, crushing the manuscript in her hand, "I *didn't* expect to be insulted by you!"

But Mrs. Van Stuphem was talking to Mrs. Prinder.

Mrs. Pompernel, her foot beating a tattoo upon the rug, stood panting and glaring at the animated, chattering, laughing maelstrom about her. No, not one—not *one* was even looking at her! Mrs. Pompernel's head swam.

"Oh, there's Mr. Pompernel," came from Mrs. Blakesley.

"Jasper," and Miss Blander lifted her finger, summoning the attention of the gentleman who had entered from the library. "Why on earth don't you see what's ailing Maria? Tell her everybody is just worn out, waiting for her to begin. Just a minute!"

She moved behind the dais. Standing together, they were within a foot of Mrs. Pompernel herself.

"I've the greatest news about Maria!" Miss Blander's tone was low, but perfectly audible to Mrs. Pompernel, who whirled about, her head erect and militant, her eyes blazing scorn and outraged pride.

"I'll thank you," she began, "if you will not use—"

Miss Blander ignored her. "I've heard the most scandalous things about her and this young friend of Herbert's. He's in *love* with Maria, and *that's* what he's here for!" She flipped a small notebook before him. "I've got all the evidence right here under my thumb—got it from Emile, her chauffeur. He has told me all about this Mr. Bentley, and says the man's just *crazy* about Maria. Come on in the library here; I want to tell you all I've found out. Why, to begin with, every night he stands across the street till Maria's light is out, and then he has Emile drive him miles and—"

Her voice died away, and for a moment the lady upon the dais felt that *she* was doing likewise.

"Serpent!" she hissed after Miss Blander, the roll of manuscript slipping unheeded from her fingers. Her hand came up unsteadily, pressing the side of her white pompadour as things whirled round and round about her. For a moment the heartless chatter of the

throne receded from her senses like the babble of the ebbing tide.

Then, with a sudden blood rush to the head, the daughter of the Vanderschloters found herself. With one stride she left the dais, pausing by the library door with a glance that swept the room with scorn.

But a loud, spontaneous outburst of handclapping seemed to greet her action, and she sensed that they answered scorn with mockery. Brightened faces turned her way, and there was a general movement attesting relief and pleasure.

"At last!" breathed Mrs. Willets loudly, and simulated a groan of relief.

Another voice rose with enthusiasm: "Such relief, Mrs. Pompernel! I just don't believe we could have stood it *another minute!*"

"I know I couldn't," cackled Mrs. Buffer as she shook her goodly sides; "only, to tell you the truth, I believe I've been asleep!"

Mrs. Van Stuphem was pushing her way toward her.

"Yes, indeed, Maria, it's just in time," smilingly. "I can tell you you've saved our lives!"

Then she halted, and the smile slowly congealed.

For the long-suffering hostess stood pantingly erect within the doorway, her Jovian brows contracted angrily, the eagle eyes flashing defiance and contempt. Then of a sudden the lady's teeth gleamed—a warning flash, like breakers at night upon a moonless shore. She straightened, swinging above her head two nobly proportioned arms at the end of which were two white, quivering fists.

"Oh, you!" she shrieked sputtering, and advanced a step. "All of you—every one—get out of my house—get out, and *stay* out—do you *hear?*"

One Homeric arm swung like a traveling crane—pointing to the door. In the sudden odd hush the voice of the lady of the house vibrated like a trumpet blast:

"Go—every one of you!" she screamed. "Go *home!*"

XXIV

THE news of Mrs. Pompernel's summary eviction of her guests was like the oft instanced rolling snowball, gathering substance as it traveled.

It began as a sensation, and by night-fall it was a scandal.

At seven o'clock, hoarse-throated newsboys were crying a "ten o'clock extra" dealing with all the facts—and more.

Uptown, dinners were delayed and telephone transmitters buzzed madly. Throughout the evening, carriages and autos, wherever bound, were constrained to stop at the homes of the heroines of the episode. Here ever changing but never wearying circles of listeners were edified by ever varying and ever multiplying particulars of the adventure of the afternoon. At the clubs, husbands and brothers and sons discussed the incident with expression of emotions that ran the gamut all the way from almost apoplectic choler up to hilarious levity.

To the younger set, an item of diversion was the generally agreed-upon circumstance of Mrs. Jasper Pompernel's having facilitated the departure of her guests by setting her dog on them.

Here, however, there was a discrepancy between rumor and truth, for which circumstantial evidence alone was responsible. True, Mrs. Pompernel's dog had been injected into the incident, but it was from no volition of his own or that of his mistress. It so happened that at the precise moment when the outraged members of the Metaphysical Circle were crowding out of the drawing room door—only too eager to shake its dust from their feet—the battle-scarred Agamemnon shot through the hall like a meteor of the night. His momentum in transit was materially augmented by the trifling circumstance that attached to his back and head was the black cat, its figure arched and spitting, its equestrianism fortified by four sinewy claws whose crescent multiples dug deep into the living meat below. It was merely an unhappy coincidence that Agamemnon's orbit intersected that of Mrs. Buf-

fer at the instant that that worthy lady's goodly bulk was at the crossing.

Momentum triumphed over mere mass, with results that were sensational for Mrs. Buffer and those immediately behind—but over this it is well to draw a veil. Suffice to say that those in the rear, still pushing through chairs in the drawing room, divined from the screams in front, dog yowls and a general *débâcle* attesting falling bodies, that the domesticities of Mrs. Pompernel's household were expediting departures with the stimulus of ably wielded brooms and mop handles. Therefore some of them sought exit through the windows, while others found oblivion and peace through the simple expedient of fainting.

It is needless to say that the version of the affair furnished by these ladies lost nothing by comparison with the contributions of those who had been at the front. If anything, their accounts had the greater interest, for they were within earshot of the library from which emanated discourse attesting that Mrs. Pompernel was giving her cousin, Miss Kitty Blander, what is vulgarly known as a tongue lashing.

"And I must say Kitty gave her back as good as she sent!" This morsel from young Mrs. Willets was given piquancy by the additional information that it seemed Kitty was going to try to get Mr. Pompernel a divorce. Mrs. Blakesley and a few others who had lingered courageously in the rear were able to impart that Mrs. Pompernel had ordered her husband to leave her house and never darken her doors again.

"Do you really mean that, Maria?" he had asked, according to young Mrs. Blakesley, and when she had left it unmistakable that she *did* mean it, with the additional injunction that he take with him "that lying, spying chauffeur," the little man had walked straight out, head up, "and looking real cheerful," according to young Mrs. Blakesley's attentive estimate through the open door.

Old Judge Blakesley had chuckled when he heard this. "Poor Pompernel!" he remarked. "I always told him he would come into luck some day if he would just be patient."

"He's coming into luck in business, too, of late." This from old Van Stuphem, who with his wife was calling. "I think he's had some good sound practical advice there from Kitty Blander. It would be funny if she *did* get him a divorce."

"Poor thing—he's had a dog's life!" Mrs. Van Stuphem murmured her sympathy with greater warmth in view of the fact that an hour before she had called upon Mrs. Pompernel and had had her card returned to her with a pungent message that had sent her driving off in dudgeon. "Do you think Kitty *can* do it, Judge?" She appealed eagerly to the legal luminary.

The Judge smiled. "Did she ever fail? If not a decree in this State, she'll easily arrange one elsewhere. You see, Maria's action has made that easy."

Van Stuphem grunted. He knew more of Wall Street than of the law. But he was able to contribute a bit of information that startled them the more.

"It's a mighty lucky thing for Maria Pompernel that she's able to pull off this marriage Wednesday between Dorothy Morton and that young cub of hers—*mighty* lucky, I tell you!" And then as the breathless questionings of the two ladies stormed him: "I just simply mean that the bottoms have dropped out of nearly all of Maria Pompernel's investments." He turned to his wife. "I can tell you to a day just when it began. Do you remember the evening you were over there to see her because she had sprained her ankle?"

Mrs. Van Stuphem remembered.

"Well, when you came back, you were telling me about some wonderful, priceless rug she had bought the day before. I couldn't help thinking that if her business men had told her what I knew of the tumble that day, she'd have been wishing she had waited another twenty-four hours before spending thousands for a crazy rug."

"I know, dear." Mrs. Van Stuphem interrupted hastily, for her husband was getting upon a sore point—a little hobby of her own. "But about Dorothy—how does her marriage with Herbert

help Maria? The child has only a small income from her grandfather—"

"*Until she marries*," finished her husband. Then he looked at Judge Blakesley as if with a question.

The Judge shrugged. "Yes, until she marries—*then* she comes into a pile—something like five millions."

The ladies gasped surprise.

Van Stuphem pursed his lips. "But she doesn't know a thing about it, and you can better believe your friend Maria Pompernel is not going to tell her." Then impressively to his wife: "And *you* mustn't tell her, either—nor you, either, Mrs. Blakesley. For it so happens that the Judge here and myself are two of the executors," he finished gloomily.

The old Judge shifted uneasily.

"It's a shame, though," he growled, "a crime to marry her to that—" He broke off, glancing at the ladies. "Poor dear little girl!" he muttered, and shook his head.

Mrs. Van Stuphem compressed her lips an instant, her eyes flashing at her husband. The lady had daughters of her own.

Van Stuphem lifted his hand and let it fall with a helpless gesture.

"My dear," he protested, "there's not a thing we can do—not a thing!"

XXV

THE gravity of the social blow Mrs. Pompernel had administered to herself was evidenced with the coming of the morning.

Beginning early, there poured in a steady stream of "regrets" from those who had been expected to attend her son's wedding—now but one day distant. By noon the rain of white envelopes was no longer examined.

The endorsements upon the cards inclosed were singularly monosyllabic in their brevity. Uniform, too, was the general zeal displayed in communicating a purpose not to attend the ceremony, most of the deliveries being rushed by footmen, by messenger boys or by special delivery. Society had lifted its

head in retaliation for a gross violation of *savoir vivre*, and had struck back—and struck hard, as it ever should.

Only Dorothy's friends remained stanch. In fact, most of them seemed constrained to shower her with a super-erogation of prenuptial floral splendor, attended with missives of cheer and affection and tactful intimations that left no doubt of their intention to be present at what they hoped was going to inaugurate a world of happier days. If there were misgivings they were concealed.

Dorothy's eyes glistened over it all—eyes that read between the lines.

"Everybody's just lovely to me," she imparted to young Mr. Pompernel's best man when he called; "but—oh, poor auntie!"

Tom Bentley shook his head, expending a puzzled grin upon the problem.

"What on earth do you suppose struck her?" he speculated. "On the level, one might think she was bewitched! Hello, old pal!" and he stooped to pet the black cat circling between his legs.

Later he conferred with Herbert's mother.

"Yes, Mr. Bentley, we will go right ahead with my son's wedding," she announced grimly. She never by any chance referred to it as her niece's wedding, perhaps because it was her son who was achieving—even though unknowingly—a *coup* involving five millions.

"If they think they're going to walk over my neck roughshod," she blazed forth, "they'll find themselves mistaken!"

Moreover, there was the memory of the French chauffeur's slander about Herbert's friend. Not that she cared particularly for the feelings of Herbert's old college chum, about whom she had found her son scowlingly reticent. She had begun rather to lose interest in him, for his attention to the bride-elect had shown her that, after all, he did not have the intelligence and man-of-the-world discrimination with which she had at first credited him. But she wished to temporize with him till after the morrow, for, after all, he had the arrangements in charge. And then—then there was the

little matter of his acquisition of the rug for her. There was possibility that, if offended, he might have Abou Hassan recall the gift.

The very thought of this contingency caused Mrs. Pompernel to shudder. The loss of a husband might be borne with equanimity, but not the loss of a priceless antique. In the black memory of yesterday's outrages there was but one bright spot: the impression that remained in her mind's eye of the dazzling effect the Persian rug had achieved upon the dais.

"And that reminds me, Mr. Billings," looking at the roll that Simmons had just deposited near her: "I'm going to ask—if it will not conflict with your decorations for the chancel—that we use the Persian rug for Herbert and Dorothy to stand upon. It will lend *such* an effect—so striking, you know."

The best man seemed to think so, too—or at least he readily agreed. Privately he had never a doubt of a striking effect being assured in case the portly Bishop should catch his toe on the edge and go tumbling down the chancel steps.

"Happy the bride that the sun shines on!" Thinking of it, Dorothy's girl friends sighed dolefully next morning as they looked out upon storm-swept skies.

Then they rallied their forces, and casting defiance in the teeth of rain and thunder cloud, invested the pretty interior of St. Morgana's Chapel and half filled it.

Yet was their presence not unsupported.

"I just had no idea Herbert Pompernel had so many friends among the young men," Evelyn Brown imparted breathlessly to the usher by her side. "Why, Jack, I thought he didn't have any!"

Jack Weatherby swept her a dry smile as they hurried down the aisle.

"You want to keep on thinking so, Evy." Then with an indignant sniff: "Say, whom do you suppose I'm doing this job for? For Herbert? Not on your life—it's for Dorothy. Same with Billy there and the other two. And the fellows—oh, they're here because Tom

Bentley made rather a point of it, you see."

"But, Jack, *this* Tom Bentley is from Michigan. Mrs. Pompernel told mamma—"

But here, with a perfectly horrid ironical grin, he left her at the pew and was gone.

In general, it was a gathering of the younger set. The elders were conspicuous by their absence.

Mrs. Jasper Pompernel, arriving at the back with Dorothy, sensed this with a sudden tightening of the lips. Yet there was balm for her bitterness in the thought of the sensation the bride's dower would later make among her recalcitrant friends.

"Then they'll all be singing another tune," she reflected grimly.

No one was singing a tune of any kind, though under a master touch the organ was pulsing soft and slow. Now, with a sudden accession of volume, it swung triumphantly into the stately measures that have been the epithalamium of countless brides for half a century.

"All ready, Mrs. Pompernel?" whispered Jack Weatherby, and his eye cut final warning to the others, lingering an instant upon the bride with a frank, appraising admiration.

"Isn't she the little peach?" he whispered to a bridesmaid. "And think of her marrying—" His brows went up slightly. "Ye gods!"

The young girl flashed him an understanding glance.

"Honestly, Jack," she murmured, "I feel as though I were taking part in a funeral."

Low as it was, Mrs. Pompernel's keen ears caught the sentence. She had also noted Mr. Weatherby's admiration of her niece. Her lightly poised lorgnette swept Dorothy with a critical disfavor that embraced everything from white satin slippers up to tulle and orange blossoms.

"Really, it is too bad, my dear child," she sighed audibly for the others, "that for *once*—certainly upon an occasion like this—you could not have selected something that was in good taste, even if not becoming to you."

The faces of the four attendant girls flushed, and their eyes flashed. The young men looked away or down, while young Mr. Weatherby muttered something rude and improper between his teeth, for which Evelyn Brown gratefully pressed his arm.

But the little bride's eyes filled suddenly with tears, and her lips quivered. It was the last word that her aunt would ever say to her as Dorothy Morton. She had wished that it might be something kinder. Then her head lifted as they moved, her eyes ranging wistfully afar off to where two black figures had emerged from the vestry. Her face cleared.

"Well, people!" gasped a young "deb," almost rising in her seat. Then she bent to her friends. "Will you *look* at the groom, girls?" Then in an excited whisper: "And what's Tommy Bentley—our Tommy Bentley—doing in this? I thought Herbert's 'Tom Bentley' was somebody from out West!"

"Herbert looks as though he were going to be hung," chuckled Dicky Turner.

"Pity he isn't!" someone growled with fervor.

"Looks more to *me* like Herby's drunk," opined Frank Billings in a whispered aside.

Certainly young Mr. Pompernel did look shockingly dour and scowling for a happy groom. Even his mother noticed it as she reached the chancel steps and placed Dorothy's hand in his.

This done, Mrs. Pompernel turned about with relief for sufficiency of duty discharged, and repaired to the comfortable vantage point of a cushioned pew in front.

She relaxed restfully, glancing carelessly across the aisle. Then she sat up sharply, stiffened as under a cold douche of water. She lifted her lorgnette incredulously.

No; there was no mistake about it. The tall gentleman across the aisle, in a pew exactly *vis-à-vis*, was no other than Senator Bentley. And the lady with him was his wife.

"Insolence!" she choked to herself. And she strove to blast them with a glance.

But the eyes of the Senator and his wife were absorbed in front. On the other hand, Mrs. Pompernel's sense of outrage was such that for a minute or two she lost all interest in what might be transpiring in front.

Suddenly she felt about her the spell of an unusual excitement. There was a rustling movement and a whispering accompaniment as when a field of corn is swept by the summer wind. Someone's ejaculation pricked her attention.

She turned her attention to the chancel, dismissing the Bentleys from her mind, but with the reservation that before she was an hour older she would find by whose authority they had been invited, *if* they had been invited at all.

Then suddenly she blinked, inclining forward sharply.

Next, involuntarily she had got to her feet, her hands resting upon the pew back before her.

Yes, that was Herbert—just disappearing within the door to the right that led to the vestry. Everyone was staring after him—even the attendants grouped within the chancel; in fact, the only ones who were not were the bride and the groom's best man. These were advancing to meet the Bishop, and did not appear to have noted Herbert's absence.

The murmur in the church grew louder, asserting itself even above the low roll of thunder without and the flailing of the rain against the windows.

With characteristic resolution and decision, Mrs. Pompernel swept across the space intervening to the vestry. She entered the room, closing the door.

"What's the matter, Herbert?" she asked summarily. "Are you ill?"

"Naw."

The heir of the Pompernels was slumped in a chair, his hair awry, his legs pointed straight before him.

Mrs. Pompernel advanced quickly. "What on earth are you doing in here, then?" she asked breathlessly. "What's the matter?"

"S'all righ'." Mr. Pompernel's utterance was heavy. Heavy, too, seemed the hand he lifted and let fall. He slumped deeper in the chair and with an

air of sullen protest against this intrusion upon his privacy.

"Oh!" Mrs. Pompernel gasped it as she stooped over him. "Oh-h, I do believe you've been drinking!"

"N'such thing!" Mr. Pompernel batted with some irritation. "Not a drink f'half-hour."

"Oh!" she dropped beside him. "My poor, precious darling—who has done this? Who has been giving you anything to drink?"

"Not' soul! Tried t'get Bentley lemme go get something. 'Not a drop,' he said; 'till this here—er—this'"—Pompernel feebly snapped his fingers in the effort to summon the word—"this job—wedding—is over."

"My poor darling! But it will never be over—it can't even occur—unless you pull yourself together. Come!"

She endeavored to pull him to his feet. But Mr. Pompernel seemed singularly reluctant.

"D'want' be married," he muttered with sulky protest. "'M not going t'be married; I r'fuse t'be married!"

"Oh, but—" Then with a happy thought: "Listen! I'm going to tell you something—I was going to keep it as a surprise. Herbert," impressively, "with Dorothy's marriage, she comes into—" She whispered into his ear.

"W'at say?"

Pompernel was half upon his feet; he caught her arm. Then sharply: "You mean that?"

Evidently she did.

Pompernel was on his feet now and swore roundly. Mrs. Pompernel cried out in horror, but the sweep of his anger checked her.

"Nice mess you've made of it with all your mystery!" he snarled. Then quickly: "Do you know what's happening out there?"

Pale to the lips, she shook her head.

He bent toward her, scowling. "Bentley's marrying your heiress, that's all!" He almost shouted it.

"I—I don't understand," helplessly. "Why?"

He glared at her recklessly. "Because I was afraid of *you*; because he knew all about my gambling and bought

up my I. O. U.'s; and he knew other things. He knew I wasn't studying to be a minister or missionary or any such rot, and he knew all about Tillie Tinkles—and, oh, a lot of other things."

"Oh!" she gasped, dropping upon a chair. "You! You, that I thought a Sir Galahad! You that—"

"Cut it out!" He gave an impatient arm swing. "It's no time to preach; it's time to *do* something. Get out there and get busy—quick—before it's too late."

He flung out of the door, with her following.

A puzzled murmur was stilled as they appeared. Mrs. Pompernel moved swiftly before the chancel, ready to lift her voice to the Reverend Bishop.

Then she paused aghast.

There was no Reverend Bishop in evidence. Nor was there sign of her ward or Bentley.

XXVI

"It'll be all right, angel—don't you be afraid!"

Young Bentley had dropped the whisper cheerily as they stepped upon the first marble tread of the approach to the chancel. Beyond, upon a second rise, he could see the Bishop waiting, just beyond where intervened the mellow splendor of the ancient rug of Persia.

"I'm not afraid!" And Dorothy flashed him a smile of confidence and affection.

Nevertheless, she *was* afraid—frightfully. Not of that which lay before; the danger lay in the impending menace behind.

"Oh, Tom," she had panted as she came to his arm, while the attendants stared—amazed, dumfounded, "do you think we'll ever be able to—"

"We'll get away with it right under her nose, dear," he had chirped confidently; "I've got it all scheduled."

And he had. That is, up to a certain point. It was on the cards that Mrs. Pompernel, *being* Mrs. Pompernel, would not wait with folded hands "and sit and grieve and wonder," when she saw her son leave his bride and duck back behind

the curtain, as it were. She would be after him. But before she could be injected as a factor in the situation she would have to be put in possession of certain facts. Of *this* Mr. Bentley had no fear. And the rest was up to his Uncle John.

Of the amazed countenance of the honorable Senator in the first pew he had an inspiring mental picture. But the governor was a good sportsman, he reflected, and there was no fear of interference there. As for his mother, he had discovered accidentally that she had been a very dear friend of Dorothy's mother, and had deplored for years the hostility that had debarred her from the Pompernel threshold. That which Bentley had *not* taken into account was the unreckoned element which so oft confounds the best laid schemes of mice and men.

He could not know that it was an heiress of five millions that hung upon his arm, for she knew naught of it herself. He could not foresee that the revelation of this trifling detail made all the difference in the world to the very human Mr. Pompernel, already self-fortified by "Dutch courage," and enabled him to cast to the winds all terrors of the maternal wrath and hurl himself into the arms of the confessional.

Meanwhile the worthy Bishop, having out of love and affection "weakly lent himself to a conspiracy," as he phrased it, was enjoying all the mental perturbation of one who ministers upon the crumbling lip of an eruptive volcano. Yet would he not be hurried through the impressive measures of the service. The church and its bride should have their due.

Therefore when young Bentley mumbled, "Afraid you'll have to shake a foot, Uncle John," the Bishop merely glared at him across the spread of rug that lay between their toes and calmly proceeded with that grave deliberation and expressive enunciation for which his delivery was famous.

To Dorothy it was all a prayer—a pæan, too, of happier days to come, a requiem for unhappy yesterdays now dead. Outside the storm seemed lulling,

and she had a sense of gliding smoothly across a harbor bar out of the turbulence of crested seas into a haven of protection and love.

Withal, her senses harked to a soft but quickening murmur in the body of the church, a multiple of perplexed and excited ejaculations and whisperings not apart from awe. Also she knew that the attendants there behind them had grown strangely still, and that one of them—Evelyn Brown she thought it was—was softly weeping.

And so they came to the ring.

The Bishop whispered:

"Just a little nearer." Simultaneously their feet crossed the edges of the Persian rug and they stood upon it together.

With a sigh, the Bishop took the circlet and seemed to bless it before he returned it to his nephew.

And Bentley almost dropped it, as many a good man has done before. For among the attendants there was an odd ripple of subdued exclamation betokening sudden excitement.

One of the girls uttered a faint scream.

"How do I know?" he heard Val Chambers say to someone. "They're just gone, that's all!"

"Gone, all right," from Jack Weatherby; "but great Scott, they must have jumped right through the wall!"

The groom breathed an inhalation of joy.

Surely "they" could only refer to Mrs. Pompernel and her precious son. Yet, from his knowledge of Dorothy's guardian, it seemed incredible that she should have departed summarily and voluntarily.

Nevertheless, if she was gone, that was enough—a matter for congratulation and relief. He didn't care *why* she left.

Most likely temper had inspired her departure. He almost expected to hear a reverberating thud from far down front, indicating that the irate matron had slammed a door.

And then suddenly he *did* hear a door!

But it was the sound of a door opening—the unmistakable bolt click and rattle accompanying the quick turning of a knob. It was from the vestry door

opening into the body of the church. There was the thud of hurrying feet, and he recognized Mrs. Pompernel's incisive tones addressing something to Herbert. Now they were before the very steps of the chancel, and he could hear them in an excited mumble.

His heart sank, and he frowned at his uncle with appeal. Mechanically almost Bentley had been following the service and its responses. He wondered how far the Bishop had progressed.

Another moment, and Dorothy's aunt would lift her imperative voice in interdiction of the completion of the ceremony, and then—

"Steady, lad!"

A whispered interpolation it was that came sharply from his uncle. Bentley blinked, caught his breath, stiffened—and slowly slipped the golden circlet upon the glove-stripped finger of the waiting hand.

"The other side!" It was Mrs. Pompernel speaking to her son. Apparently she was upon one of the treads of the chancel steps. "Quick—look through the choir room!"

Look for *what*?

Again Bentley wandered, struggling between curiosity and an almost hysterical impulse to laughter. But he repressed both. For he had felt Dorothy shrink to his side, and it was more important just then to bestow a light reassuring pressure upon her fingers.

"Ain't nothing nor nobody *there*, I tell you!" Young Pompernel's speech was strong with conviction, however infirm grammatically.

"Sure?"

There was a plaint of affirmation. It was etched against a stillness like that which falls in the dramatic pauses of a play—a stillness tense, breathless, expectant. It was punctured by a girl's shrill titter. Somewhere in the back a young man frankly laughed.

And now came a quickened rustle—a low murmur waxing stronger—from the body of the church, a swell of subdued but excited comment and speculation that came like a rippling wave to the arches of the chancel. It seemed to affect the attendants, for they were re-

laxed into two or three little groups and seemed whispering excitedly.

"But I think we ought to do *something*—not just stand here like a flock of sheep!"

It was Polly Morgan who spoke, and Bentley reflected uneasily upon how little *any* of them could do when Mrs. Pompemel allowed the ceremony to reach the point at which she would elect to forbid the bans.

"Well, don't that beat the deuce!"

It was Dicky Chalmers who propounded this as he rubbed his chin. "Say, Jack, you're nearest; peep in the vestry there and see if you see them."

Jack Weatherby, standing by the door communicating directly between chancel and vestry, announced that he *had* peeped and they were not there.

Bentley *knew* they were not. He could hear Mrs. Pompemel behind him. His ear had been harking back, trying to catch what she was saying to her son, hoping to anticipate her purposes. One sentence only could he catch:

"Now don't worry. At the right moment, I'll put a stop to Dorothy's marriage. I'm here, and I'll *be* here!"

She was. And if there were any lingering doubt about it, Dorothy's frightened movement again brought him back to a sense of it. And where was his uncle now?

The Bishop's voice answered for him. It lifted suddenly with sonorous impressiveness. There was acquisition of a new tone—one solemnly imperative, voicing injunction masterful and final—pregnant with the authority of the ages:

"Whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder!"

The young man started. Then suddenly he was conscious of a relaxing in the tenseness of the figure beside him. He heard Dorothy sigh—a sigh as soft as the whisper of wind-blown leaves in the silence of an autumn night. Dully it came to him that it was all over.

But *could* it be that?

He caught his breath. Why, yes, it *must* be! Why, yes, the thing was done! And if so, danger, obstacles, interferences—all, all were outdistanced, and Doro-

thy was nobody's but his—and his forever!

A wild, boyish impulse to shout seized him—to turn then and there and swing Dorothy to his breast. Instead, he pulled himself together sharply, abashed. For the blossom-crowned head beside his own was inclining reverently forward. Vaguely it came to him that the great sleeve of lawn before him was raised in the invocation of a blessing.

A blessing never completed!

For, with its first utterance, there was a blinding flame flash as from under their very feet. The Persian rug rose an actual inch, and with a seething hiss as of water upon reddened coals. Then it settled sharply.

"The lightning!" screamed a voice.

"The lightning's struck!"

The answering cry of consternation was almost instantly checked by the shock of a greater surprise—the surprise of a picture leaping into view as though shot from a projecting lens—the picture of the Bishop, his arm raised as he spoke quiet, smiling reassurance—the Bishop, and with him the bride and groom.

There they were in full view upon the ancient rug—and in full view, for that matter, ever after, was everything that touched its surface.

And at that moment, as if in happy augury, the sun burst all conqueringly through the broken roof of the scattering rain clouds, and the great east window in the chancel broke into a glorifying effulgence of prismatic hues that sprayed the white robe of the little bride like a fountain of sparkling jewels.

And then the pipes of the organ crashed into the joyous swing of the wondrous Mendelssohn wedding march, and young Bentley found himself slowly moving down the marble steps again, Dorothy upon his arm, but contracting the slightest before a black figure at the left—the figure of a woman, darkly scowling but shrinking backward from their way.

And then in about a minute it seemed they were out in the sunlight, and everybody was crowding and piling over one another in the effort to get at them. Men were wringing his arm off; girls were

hugging Dorothy and crying, and everything was just a tumult of the maddest excitement—except perhaps the late chauffeur of the Pompernel establishment, calmly erect there behind the steering wheel of the brand new Bentley car.

"And to think, dear," cried Polly

Morgan, her voice tremulous to the verge of happy hysteria—"to think we all came here with our long faces to see you married to Herbert Pompernel, and instead, we saw you married to Tommy!"

And, oddly enough, all of them thought they *had* seen it!



SNOW SONG

By Aloysius Coll

WINTER, winter, the burly and severe,
 The dust of lonely blossoms on a last gray leaf,
 Since love is page and valet to the white-haired year,
 And answers every summons of the gruff old thief,
 I know that in the snow,
 Where his tired feet roam,
 A modest little violet shall blossom in her home.

Winter, winter, the dreary and the long,
 The icy ghost of waters in a brook run low,
 Since love is harp and viol to your cold old song,
 And answers ev'ry discord that the wild winds know,
 I shall wait at the gate
 Of the fleetfoot spring,
 To hear the bobolincos and the red-throat sing.

Winter, winter, a sorrow come to port,
 The silver-hooded spirit of a rose that sleeps,
 Since love is fool and poet in your dull gray court,
 And rhymes with every couplet that your chill heart keeps,
 I shall linger with a finger
 On your frosty latch today,
 And enter with the music and the flowers of the May!



"SEVEN years ago I landed in this town with only one dollar, but that dollar gave me my start."

"You must have invested it very profitably."

"I did. I telegraphed home for money."

CHANT ROYAL OF HACK WORK

By M. K. Powers

THIS is a hard and thankless task, I know—
Hood's Rhymester warns me even as I write.
What though the printed records go to show
But one chant royal yet has come to light
This side of the Atlantic? Hear that roar?
The Wolf is knocking at my hall room door,
Of Art demanding one more sacrifice.
R. Walpole knew that each man has his price,
And I know mine. Quite willingly I own
One luscious filet mignon would suffice.
A poet cannot live on love alone.

Love comes, love lingers, love may even go;
Love lifts the poet to a dizzy height;
Love comforts, love inspires, love healeth woe,
But even Homer had an appetite.
Though Pyrrha's eyes could charm me heretofore,
And Chloe's lips compel me to adore,
All vainly now they ply each fond device.
No more do eyes or wistful lips entice.
Where once I sang of Sybil's slender zone,
I sing today of puddings made of rice.
A poet cannot live on love alone.

I used to write of hearts and mistletoe,
And fond impassioned lyrics would indite.
Like pigeons to the wind each verse I throw—
Like homing pigeons they direct their flight
Back to my nest. And now my need is sore—
Slips pink and green and blue have I galore.
Too oft received, they lose their early spice—
"The editor regrets"—terse, clear, concise,
But hardly edible. The cruel stone
They proffer me; they keep the buttered slice.
A poet cannot live on love alone.

Three rounds are finished. Now I see my foe
Grow fearful of the outcome of the fight.
Come, Rhymes, be ready—and you, Metre, flow
With facile smoothness, like a ribbon light
Unrolling its sleek length across the floor.

THE SMART SET

This stanza done leaves but one stanza more!
 I cannot fail where I have conquered thrice.
 This pace will have it finished in a trice.
 I see the Editor upon his throne
 Inscribe the cheque that loosens Hunger's vise.
 A poet cannot live on love alone.

With fond expectancy I fairly glow—
 I seem to see the linen's spotless white;
 I seem to see the waiters bending low,
 The candles shaded dim, the silver bright,
 And Beauty entering at every door.
 I seem to hear the deep-toned cello's snore,
 The popping corks, the tinkle of the ice.
 I seek the supple Gaston's suave advice.
 Ah, me! See how my too fond hope has grown
 Into a vision fair of Paradise!
 A poet cannot live on love alone.

L'ENVOI

I give you here in form and rhyme precise
 That which America has penned but twice.
 One thing remains—the moral must be shown—
 A starving man cannot be overnice,
 A poet cannot live on love alone.



REVISIONS FOR THE DYSPEPTIC

By Neeta Marquis

FATE cannot harm me—I have dined on hay.
 Now good digestion wait on Fletcherizing, and health on both.
 A nut is as good as a feast.
 The proof of the pudding is in the chemical analysis thereof.
 Pepsin is the best sauce.
 Drink to me only without ice.



THE man who takes himself seriously is very apt to be a joke.

WENTER'S HOUR

By Charles Francis Read

INTO the riven bosom of groaning Manhattan the tormenting ingenuity of the contracting engineer had driven home another giant column of concrete and steel and labeled it the Harkinson Process Building.

In his office on the twelfth floor John Wenter sat idly at his desk, and as he brushed the ash from his cigar he smiled to himself indulgently. It was three in the afternoon, and his first day's work in the new office all but lay behind him. Through a window he could see a bit of green blue bay sparkling under the lash of a crisp September breeze. Within the hour he would be out there in the new powerboat Martin & Martin had delivered the day before—two hundred horsepower, thin as a shingle and guaranteed forty miles an hour.

How short a time ago he had mightily longed for a five horsepower affair to put above the dam in the little river that ran through the inland village where he had existed before the Harkinson Process had turned things topsy-turvy in the mining world and made him a multimillionaire almost overnight! Ten dollars in the old days for a holiday trip across the lake, and ten thousand now for a boat that a healthy boy with a tack-hammer could turn to scrap in an hour's time! The relative expenditure remained about the same, and yet—

In front of the building the latest forecast in automobile construction waited to whirl him to the water front. Odd that it should recall at this moment the old bicycle he had bought when a boy with money earned by carrying milk! The old farm, with its never ending chores, was very different from the great dairy crammed with mechanical devices

he had just given his father. A tear glistened in his eye. How eagerly the old gentleman was going about the breeding experiments he had dreamed of making for thirty years! How happy, too, his mother seemed nowadays, freed from the cares of the farm! The last five years had taken from her age rather than added to it. She had always been proud of her boy, but what would she say to the new hospital he had in mind to found in her name—what would she say to that?

Soon Jack would be home for the Thanksgiving recess. Next fall he would come into the office—if he didn't break his neck meanwhile winning games for the Priceville eleven. Some men would have sent their boys to an Eastern school, but, thank God, Priceville was still good enough for him. Next year President Carson—good old Prexy—could announce the gift of Wenter Hall. Out of consideration for Laura's fears—as though it could turn the head of the finest son a man ever had—he would wait for this until Jack graduated; but if *his* father, when he was a boy, had been able to do a thing like this, he would only have thought the more—

He dropped his cigar with a sigh. How time flies when once its wings are full grown! After all, the years of small things and petty devices had been happy ones. Thank God, the fat ones had not come too late. He was still young enough to enjoy the freshness of life; the zest of other days still carried over into the present. Though he very well knew that the word "power" is written in blazing letters over the altar of Mammon, thank God, it was not the power to rule his fellow men that sweetened the

taste of life in his mouth this afternoon, but rather the power from henceforth on to mold his life in generous proportions upon the framework of the dreams of his youth.

He sprang buoyantly to his feet and stepped to a window. In the distance through a crevice between two towering buildings the bit of blue bay sparkled in the sun, but aside from this there was nothing to be seen but other windows, windows smaller than his own. Up and down, east and west, nothing but windows, thousands upon thousands of them, each one guarding, lighting, wisely, restrictedly, its quota of his fellow-men. He threw the sash far up, and leaning out, looked down into the roaring street and upward to the strip of blue sky above.

His fellow men! Suddenly the full import of the words smote him with a force that made him reel and clutch the window sill. Blind fool that he had been! Though he might take the things of the world to himself for toys; though he might pick them up eagerly one after the other to cast them negligently aside when they palled, still one great thing must always remain and grow in height and breadth and depth with each succeeding day—the power—the power he held, the power he must hold over his fellow men, the men behind the smaller windows.

"No, not *over* them, oh, Lord, but *for* them!" he cried half aloud, closing his eyes as if physically to shut out the blinding glare of the revelation.

It was not to be denied, however. He felt the weight of it bowing his shoulders as he turned away to pace the room. There was, then, a stewardship. And to think he had sneered at the term so short a time ago. The man who can do big things in a big way must give himself to the task body and soul, day and night. For this there can be no help. It is not for such a man to mold his life upon the dwarfish framework of his own desires—he must build upon the immense structure of the dreams of all humanity. He must be eyes for his fellow men, looking out over the whole earth and far ahead into the future. He must be ears for

them, anxiously listening each moment to the beat of the great heart of commerce whose orderly pulsations mean life and health to all the members. He must be hands and brains for them, lending strength and purpose to the gropings of the millions behind the smaller windows.

Abruptly he halted in his stride and half turned about, muscles tense with listening. In another moment he relaxed with a puzzled frown. For an instant he could have sworn he heard his wife calling to him in indistinguishable words as if from a great distance; but this was impossible, for she had gone down the bay that morning on the Wickfords' yacht. A chance sound from the street had deceived him. He turned his head again, and his gaze, momentarily detached from the inner vision, fell upon a long mirror let into the opposite wall, a strange mirror he had not noticed before. As he looked into it he scowled and red-dened. What had the architects been thinking of to put a looking glass in his office—and a concave one at that? The distorted, squatty reflection he caught in it was an insult and out of all keeping with the solemn ecstasy of his mood.

"Gentleman to see you, sir. Says he must." The office boy's questioning voice as he offered a card interrupted his contemplation, and he turned away with relief from the gross caricature, to meet the smiling, expectant eyes of a tall, spare man standing indecisively on the threshold.

"Dr. Carson!"

"Well, John Wenter?"

For a moment, as their hands clasped, the familiar face blurred before Wenter's eyes. Silently he motioned him to a chair, and as he waited, not trusting himself to speak, he could almost hear the boom of the old college clock and see a gawky, red-faced boy hurrying through the campus in a desperate effort to make chapel on time.

"Well, John Wenter," the older man repeated as he rested a hand on either knee and smiled, "are you the same boy I used to know?"

Wenter smiled in turn as he noted in the kindly eyes and about the corners of

the firm mouth the tokens of the deference properly due the first vice-president of the greatest world corporation of modern times. Years ago he had been asked to call on President Carson in his office for the purpose of explaining, if he could, his part in a peculiarly outrageous sophomore prank, and Prexy had eyed him then as now, with a hand on either knee, but with a very different expression on his face—yes, an entirely different expression. Quite suddenly, then, he was reminded that the corporation judged the time of their second official to be worth something in the neighborhood of a dollar a minute, and, though, to be sure, he was through with the day's work, the recollection in some strange manner sobered him.

"What can I do for you, Dr. Carson?" he inquired crisply, straightening in his chair and commencing to drum nervously on the desk.

"Why, you know—it is always the same old story with Priceville," the visitor began, with some embarrassment, as if noting the change. "Money. I am sorry, but we can't seem to get along without it."

Wenter listened without comment to the deprecatory explanation. It was gratifying to find that a man like Carson, a man whose entire life stood for things everlasting, must needs recognize and pay homage to the power delegated to his old pupil. The revelation must indeed have been divine. "Would ten thousand help you?" he asked, glancing involuntarily at his watch with the question.

Wenter Hall was to have cost at least a hundred thousand, but quite suddenly he felt himself grown cautious. The pool he had entered into the other day might come down on him at any minute for a cool million. The man entrusted with great enterprises must take care not to spill his heart's blood too freely in lesser causes; he must consider his stewardship. That the smaller gift was large enough was plainly evidenced by the president's joy as he thanked him again and again when the cheque was written. Too bad the old boy has to go around begging like this.

Smilingly he bowed him to the door and returned to his desk to dispose of the few papers still scattered upon it. As he sat down he became aware for the first time that the fourposts of the flat-topped affair were not the sample columns he had taken them for in his first cursory inventory of his new quarters. The one on the right was the exquisitely carved figure of a man, that on the left a woman, the two of them bearing the massive overhanging top upon their bowed shoulders and upraised hands. Wonderingly he stooped to study the half-hidden faces, but straightened instantly with an exclamation of disgust—the woman's face was haggard and contorted with anguish, the man's grim with menacing hate. Ugh! Who could have ordered a thing like that? He would hunt the fellow up in the morning and tell him what he thought of his taste in office furnishings.

"Gentleman to see you, sir." Again the strangely hushed voice of the boy brought welcome interruption; the card he offered bore the words, "Royal Sanderson — *Progress*." Wenter's eyes lighted as he read. He had heard of Sanderson, and the magazine was a substantial, conservative one. Besides, he still enjoyed being interviewed.

The man who entered a moment later had keen eyes and a lean, interesting face, prepossessing save for a faint birthmark on the forehead that forked above the nose and spreading out above the eyes dwindled away into two points at the roots of the hair. "We are getting up an article for our next issue, Mr. Wenter," he began promptly. "It is to be called, 'Failures at Forty—Successes at Fifty.' Something, you know, to counteract in a wholesome way the present day idea that a man of forty is necessarily down and out as far as initiative goes." He paused for a moment inquiringly. "We would very much appreciate a statement from you, Mr. Wenter," he continued in a manner delightfully deferential, adding, with an infectious chuckle: "Nowadays, you know, the country looks not to its minute men but to its *dollar-a-minute men*."

Wenter laughed with him, but guard-

edly. Clever fellows, these interviewers. He offered him a cigar and lit his own with a serious air. "Well, sir," he began after a moment's consideration, in which he could think of nothing special to say, "I don't know that there is very much to tell. Five years ago, in a small country town out West, Wickford, a friend of mine, now on our board of directors but then a poor dentist, came to me with a proposition to buy stock in a new company organized to promote an untried process for the separation of the metals from their ores without the use of a flux. I looked into the matter and finally bought a few hundred shares at ten cents on the dollar. When the demonstration furnaces proved a success I borrowed all the money I could get hold of and bought more at twenty-five. When the stock was listed and went up to par I borrowed still more on what I had and bought again."

He settled back in his chair and smiled genially. "You know the rest," he went on, "how it went to two hundred after that, then to five, and is still quoted around this figure, after two additional issues, of which I have acquired my share. I became one of the corporation's legal advisers, then a director and finally was elected to the office I now hold."

He stopped and eyed the reporter intently. The pencil had been very busy, evidently taking everything down verbatim. He frowned and looked at the ceiling. "You might say," he proceeded more slowly, "that I merely seized the opportunity that presented itself in the form of my friend's suggestion. This, however, presupposes the fact that I was alive enough to recognize the chance of my life when it came knocking at my door. Possibly this is the main difference, after all, between failure and success. Though I might add right here, that when I was making an average of five dollars a day as a petty lawyer in a small town, I did not recognize myself as a failure, at all. I had pretty much the same tastes then as now—though I had more leisure in which to enjoy them than money with which to gratify them. Now I have the means but not

the time." He sighed. "It is a sacrifice, you see."

He paused; then, as his face brightened again, he hurried on. "Sacrifice—that is the word exactly. The stewardship the man of large affairs must hold, the power delegated to him by his fellow men and by the greater Power above, demands a measure of self-denial, of painful endeavor, that no man but one burdened in a like manner—" He broke off abruptly, turned about to the window and leaned forward intently. It had come again, was still in his ears, that far-off cry of his wife calling to him in a jargon of indistinguishable words. In another moment, however, it had resolved itself into the wailing whistle of the steam hoist in a new building down the street.

He impatiently faced the reporter again, stared at him dumfounded, then rose to his feet uncertainly. The birthmark on the fellow's forehead was a dull crimson, as if someone had painted there a pair of flaming horns with two sweeping strokes of the brush. His face was leaden-hued and his lips parted in a sardonic grin, as if he were laughing in a fit of silent, devilish merriment. In another instant the color faded, the mouth straightened and he got up hastily.

"Beg pardon, Mr. Wenter," he exclaimed. "I rarely have these attacks—*petit mal* the doctors call them. I'm very sorry to have disturbed you, and am very grateful for the interview. You have been most interesting." He hurried out, and Wenter passed a trembling hand over his face as he sank into his chair.

"Two ladies to see you, sir." He was badly shaken, and he rose with a sigh of relief to greet the women as they entered. One was a society woman well known for her various philanthropic fads, the other a young salesgirl who had married a wealthy settlement worker. Both wore simple afternoon gowns, the cost of which Wenter could shrewdly estimate. After them came a tall, impassive footman carrying with both arms what appeared to be a bundle of white satin.

The older woman greeted him with

smiling effusion. "Mr. Wenter," she began abruptly with a high-keyed laugh, "you shall know at once the very worst—now that we have succeeded in capturing you in your very lair. Can you imagine what it is? We are raising funds for another floating hospital." She shook her head reprovingly at him. "Oh, you needn't look so glum now. We are only asking the men we know—and a very few that we don't—for just one day's income for the good of the cause. Now don't you think that is a very clever idea?" She inclined her head to one side and smiled roguishly at him from under the brim of her hat. "You really can't guess how beautifully it has worked."

"And we have figured it all out for you, so you needn't waste a minute," the other woman broke in, with a very creditable replica of her companion's tones and laugh. "At a dollar a minute"—she referred with a painstaking frown to a minute chatelaine pad—"at a dollar a minute, Mr. Wenter, your share would be just sixty times twenty-four"—with a triumphant laugh—"just one thousand four hundred and forty dollars; and that doesn't count the return from your investments."

Wenter laughed drily and folded his arms. Silly, faddy women disgusted him. "My dear Mrs. Barnell," he exclaimed, "you forget that I do not work twenty-four hours a day, and that this foolish dollar-a-minute talk has arisen out of some idle newspaper theorizing, based upon my supposed salary and the five hours a day I usually put in here at the office." The faces of his callers clouded, and he found himself enjoying a sensation he had never experienced before, an ability to refuse extortionate demands without at the same time feeling humiliated. "I'll give you a hundred," he added with finality.

Then he frowned and turned halfway about in his chair. Again that voice calling to him from a long way off, Laura's voice. What was it she was trying to say? Sweat started on his forehead as he stared distraught at the footman across the room, whose face under this apparent scrutiny turned a deep red.

Gradually the voice resolved itself into a feeble wail apparently proceeding from the satin bundle which the man carried.

"Oh, don't be alarmed," Wenter heard one of the women saying. "It is only the little thing we carry about with us as a sample. You shall see it, Mr. Wenter, since you have been so very generous. James, show Mr. Wenter." Automatically the man advanced while the woman rose to draw aside the covering of the bundle.

Speechless, forgetting to rise, Wenter gazed at the object revealed upon the white down comforter. Never in his life had he seen anything like it—never, unless it might have been years ago in an exhibit of mummies from Peru. It was alive, however, for now and then its withered lips moved in a faint whine and its cold eyes slowly opened to give him a senile stare, while the tiny clawlike hands clutched fretfully at the coverlid.

"Horrible!" he cried at last, when he could break the spell of its ghastly fascination. "Take it away."

"Oh, you needn't mind—it is only a marasmic tenement baby," the women explained in unison as they moved to the door, and he saw that they were laughing at him.

"Wait!" He sprang up to follow, but they hurried on through the door without heeding him as a tall man of somewhat self-conscious bearing opened it to enter.

"Ha! So Mrs. Barnell is on your trail, is she, Wenter?" the caller commented drily, syllabbling his words in odd, drawling fashion. "Wenter," he continued in cold, level tones, "I've got to quit—quit for good and all, if I want to live another year. Five doctors have told me the same thing, one after the other, and I've got to believe them. I've run my race, and now it's up to you." He stopped short with a frown, as if throttling bitter memories, and Wenter seized the opportunity to express a perfunctory disbelief and sympathy, to which the other man's only reply was a momentary closure of the eyes and a derisive outthrust of the lower lip.

Wenter's heart was beating against his ribs as if it meant to break them, and

he trembled all over. Rumors in plenty there had been concerning the possible retirement of the head of the Process Company. Gardiner had been abroad for six months—some said for pleasure, some said for paresis. Certainly he had not carried a cane when he left. Five of the directors, including Gardiner and himself, controlled a majority of the stock. Wenter could not trust himself, and remained silent.

Gardiner shot him a keen glance, then smiled sardonically. "Yes, I know you will be damned glad to get the big place," he said. "And," he added with sudden venom, "it will kill you—kill you in less than five years, just as it's done for me." He paused and steadied himself with his cane. "But never mind," he went on more quietly; "you'll live a hundred meanwhile, never fear. You think you know something about responsibility now. Ha!" He broke off abruptly and fell to studying the rug under his feet.

When he raised his eyes again, Wenter felt himself shrinking from the fire in them. "But think of the power, man!" he muttered hoarsely. "Think of the power. No man living—not even you or I—can realize what it means to be able to fix the market price of a half-dozen metals. Think of it! Not a hammer stroke on iron, not the firing of a gun nor the flashing of a message over wire takes place without tacit consent. Nothing is too small for us to know, nothing too great to undertake. Half a million men on our payroll, two million eating from our hands—and a hundred million trembling at our word. Kings rule by our counsel, though they know it not, and princes come to us openly asking alms. I tell you, Wenter," he stammered as he raised his cane high in

the air, "we've got—the whole earth—in our grasp. Next—it'll be the air—and then—and *then*," he shouted raucously as he tottered, "*it'll be—the stars!* Oh, God, my head—my head!" he shrieked as he fell.

With the crash Wenter started dazedly to his feet. Before him stood his wife, pale with indignation; about him were the familiar office fixtures, and through the narrow window, in the crevice between Martin's machine shop and the hotel, sparkled a bit of the blue river. In a far corner his glance instinctively came to rest upon a lustrous milk white globe as it rolled about on the floor like a great marble.

"Give it to me." His wife held out an uncompromising hand as he stooped with drawn smile to pick up the ball. "You promised me, John Wenter, that you would never do this again," she exclaimed hotly. "I don't care if a rajah or a mahatma or somebody did give it to you. You shall not look into the horrid thing any more. You don't know how awful your face looked as you stared into it. I spoke to you three times, and finally I just had to knock it off the desk."

She was upon the verge of tears. "I hate those years in India!" she cried in sobbing vexation. "They make me afraid of you." Without reply, other than to give her the crystal, Wenter walked over to the window and looked soberly out into the deserted village street. Then with a sigh he returned to his desk, drew out a drawer, took from it a bit of paper and deliberately tore this into small pieces.

"Wickford wanted me to buy some cheap stock," he explained. "At first I thought I would, but I'm not going to now. The risk's too great."



MRS. SCRAPPINGTON—My contempt for your behavior is too deep for words!

MR. SCRAPPINGTON—Thank you! Thank you!

ON BEING DIFFERENT

By Robert M. Gay

IT is a curious paradox, interesting equally to the humorist and the philosopher, that all men long both to be different and alike.

Each of us affords the absorbing spectacle of a human atom gyrating wildly on the string of life like an apple on the end of a stick, yearning to fly off centrifugally, yet lured as strongly centripitally toward a common center. It is what is called a humorous situation, yet is not without its pathos.

Each of us, of a certain evolutionary stage, for instance, takes to appearing on formal occasions in a black coat with two tails and adorned with a white tie. We do this because the rest of men do. Yet most of us cherish a longing to appear in a blue coat without any tails, and with a purple tie, simply because the rest of men do not. If we did so appear, and the rest rose up in their wrath and slew us, they would be following the same impulse which is said to make all normal rats eschew the company of the tailless. Yet in the breast of each red slayer there would burn, carefully hidden, a tiny flame of admiring envy because he had not had the courage to go and do likewise.

It is evident that no one man could be different if most men were not alike. The significant fact is that each knows past cavil that he himself is the different one. We are not responsible for this conceit; it is born in us. If we are prompted at times to paraphrase the cry of the pharisee—though scarcely in the mood of prayer: "I thank my stars that I am not as other men are," let us not repine or upbraid ourselves as snobs. Let us not be wholly ashamed. Our exclamation does not necessarily mean

that we hold ourselves better than other men, but merely that we believe ourselves to be different. It is the outcry of the Differential in us against the Syncretical.

In this indomitable belief in our own individuality lies much of the happiness of the world. That our belief is usually unconscious is merely an indication that it is instinctive. The great minds which officiated at the birth of our country proclaimed that all men are born equal, and, ever since, their posterity have been denying that it is so. Equal constitutionally, legally, theoretically, by all means, if it gives the legal fraternity any pleasure to think so; but equal physically, mentally, morally, actually—never, though we die. It has become a sore point with us Americans; and yet it is not really the matter of equality that troubles us, but the matter of likeness. Whatever may be the case in geometry, in life things may be equal without being alike. If you will grant us that we are not like some other men, we shall not worry about our likeness with them. As Mr. Galsworthy has shown so well in his "Fraternity," the real barrier between classes is at bottom olfactory. A profound observation, though he may deny that he ever made it. It points to the truth that our sense of individuality is instinctive, having nothing to do with reason, any more than have other important affairs in life. The quandary of the old woman in "Mother Goose"—"If I be I, as I think I be, my little dog at home will know me"—strikes us as amusing because it is so impossible. It is an instance of reason running away with instinct.

However conventional we may be,

however tightly we may have fastened down the hatches of our soul ship upon its unruly crew, this dim groping toward uniqueness, like murder, will surely out. One man gives joy to his soul by wearing a straw hat and a red tie with a frock coat, another by building a Queen Anne balcony on a Colonial house. These lack imagination, though they possess sublime courage. One, finding that his friends know nothing of mezzotints, reads up and secretly scorns his friends forever after. They take to Strauss music or psychotherapeutics or Nietzsche and tilt their noses as assiduously at him. The world is so full of a number of things that there are as many of these marks of distinction as of badges at a political convention.

The inevitable result of this struggle after distinction is that in some localities it has become distinguished to be ordinary. If in the husking bee all the ears took to being crooked or red, divination would have to be practised with the straight or white. This is the way of nature and therefore of man. When the exceptional outnumber the usual, the usual become the exceptional, Hibernian as it may sound to say so. But to seize upon some fortuitous or customary badge of eccentricity, hoping by that means to earn an easy reputation for individuality, is the part of stupidity or of youth, because these are the very badges everyone else seizes upon. When your boy goes to college it takes him less than a month to attach to his person all the distinguishing marks of his new social estate. He knows that when he returns to his native village, arrayed in clothes that would have filled Solomon with surprise, he will be the envy of his former mates; yet it never occurs to him to acquire an eccentric fame at college by continuing to wear his village clothes there. In the academic atmosphere the plant of uniformity flourishes, however vagrantly; yet nowhere does it put forth so many sprouts—in the botanical sense. The college youth thinks to win a repute for originality by wrecking a restaurant, hoisting a cow into the chapel belfry, stealing a signboard, not recollecting that by these very vagaries he is

joining the innumerable throng of those who have done these same old "stunts" a thousand times before. The shocked expression on the face of the public fills his soul with joy. To the public which never does these things, however much it would like to, they are perennially new and eccentric. And, as we have seen, each of those who make up the public is trying his level best, though in less violent manifestations, to impress it upon his comrades that he, too, is surprisingly original.

To the humorist or philosopher an amusing feature of this incessant ebullition is that it is so useless. It seems never to enter anyone's head that the only way for us to be everlastingly different is simply to be ourselves. The flowers of the field keep up no such perpetual hubbub in the matter as we do, yet no two are alike. We who see such remarkable differences in our friends have nevertheless a horror of being like the mass, and are not content to let the two opposing forces shape us. Yet what do all our efforts to be different amount to, more than to make us unlike those nearest us but like a great body elsewhere? There is really something subtly humorous in this continuous performance of jumping out of the frying pan into the fire. It is essentially human. Your dog is like no other dog, yet he never gave a thought to being original. He wags his tail and flaps his ears and snores and sneezes as the Lord intended, yet you adore him for his uniqueness and stoutly maintain that there is not such another in the world.

The fact is then that originality, like popularity, comes to those only who do not seek it. So surely as we set out to be individual, we adopt some freak which we have read of or have observed in others and so become of a class. So surely as we give the matter not a thought, we become individual, hence unclassifiable. We can readily classify our acquaintances, and even our friends and relatives; but to our intimates and family, whom we know to the core, we refuse even the classification which they by their oddities invite. The reason is that easily discoverable similarities

among people are always superficial. You may say of So-and-so that he is a gourmet or a woman hater or a vegetarian. You think you have classified him by the very trait which he thinks makes him individual. Adopt him into your family, hear his views on religion, baseball, woman suffrage, education, temperance and bridge whist, and you may find him discreetly conventional. But live with him for a year, watch his ways of buttoning his collar, economizing his earnings or spending them, eating his oatmeal, reading your books and saying his prayers, and you will find him grow startlingly individual because of those very thousand and one nothings which he thinks—if he thinks of them at all—link him to the mass. All the while he will keep up a delightful pretense of individuality through his chosen fad of gormandizing, misogynizing, vegetarianizing, singularly unoriginal in it yet splendidly ridiculous. He thinks he has fooled you, that you take him for an original—as you do, though not at his valuation—and he is happy.

The irony of all this becomes evident. It is the irony that sits laughing at the heart of life. Yet we all solemnly pin on our particular badge with a sublime assumption that everybody will believe the inscription—for all the world as if a rose tree which had managed to produce a gall should claim to be no longer a rose tree. It is this perversity which makes us sneakily fond of our vices. We think that they hedge us off from the common run, not realizing that our virtues are probably rarer. Cromwell was not ashamed of his wart, and there are those who are ready to brag of an extra toe or finger. On the other hand, we always loathe in their extreme form those weaknesses which we possess in moderation. We bridle with complacency upon being told that we are original, but are hardly pleased to be called peculiar. Thus does the counteracting force toward uniformity make itself felt. If the top felt no gravity, it could not spin; if it had no motion, it could not stand. We whirl upon our pivots, we hum proudly, we flash our colors, we take eccentric jumps, and, like the top, we

end by dying where we stood. The hum, the colors, the dignity of our bearing, all are ours and ours alone, yet we regard them not. The jumps are the thing.

A man once observed casually that it must be fine to be mildly insane, because, said he, "crazy people have such a good time." His observation was made more for the shock it caused than for any truth it veiled, yet he meant that the mentally irresponsible can without incurring criticism be absolutely, satisfyingly individual—a blissful state which goes far to offset any ordinary disturbance of the gray matter. The old lady who fancied herself a teapot, and sat for hours crooking one arm into a spout and the other into a handle was, for example, unique. We cannot guess what happiness the sense of her originality gave her. The mere fact that she and the rest of her kind look upon the mass of humanity as unbalanced indicates a condition of serenity which we, of the mass, may well envy.

We think an eccentric man is off his own center, whereas he is in all probability merely off ours. The eccentric, the original, the genius, we say, know no laws. As a matter of fact, they are the product of laws which have been left free to act. With most of us the tendency toward uniformity has been reinforced by all the resources of the schoolmaster; with them, the two tendencies—toward uniformity and differentiation—have had full play. To say that true individuality is akin to genius is merely to say that both passively submit to the shaping of circumstance, although in both the tendency of the apple to fly off the stick has perhaps become stronger than its tendency to stay on. It has abrogated the common center and chosen a center of its own. Hence it is that, in spite of the usual slurs cast upon them by the crowd who remain on the stick, there are no more perfectly poised or steadfastly determined people in the world than the oddities, the originals, the geniuses, the insane. Vain is the compassion we expend upon them, we who "fluctuate idly without term or scope," of whom "each half-lives a hun-

dred different lives," who are always pushing and crowding like a flock of sheep for shelter and warmth, yet are ever starting out like so many Lot's wives with reverted faces, to end, like her, poor saline compromises.

However advancing civilization may work to fuse us, we shall always present enough differences to afford the humorist some amusement. The shepherd sees differences in his sheep. But one goat in the field may afford more comedy than all the flocks of Admetus. It will be a sad world when eccentricity had disappeared. Yet, if our stage and literature are to be believed, it is fast disappearing. The Touchstones and Gobbos and Malvolios and Sir Tobys are as extinct as the dodo. The choleric old gentlemen and plethoric watchmen and

humorous lieutenants and little French lawyers have gone the way of the great auk. We demand of our playwrights people like ourselves, poor drab creatures who dress in the prevailing fashion and have the manners of the "Handbook of Social Etiquette." Our very beggars have lost their picturesqueness, and for originality our literature has had recourse to the babies and the dogs. Our poor efforts to be eccentric deceive nobody but ourselves, because they are conscious. Where have gone the Sam Johnsons and Doctor Darwins and Lumley Skeffingtons and Crispin Tuckers of yesteryear? To be queer as they is to put the alienist on our trail. We are not finely simple enough to be queer with the proper air. It requires a large and elemental nature to be impressive in a frayed coat.



THE RISING CONQUEROR

By Charles C. Jones

HIS way is a way on the mighty hills
Or the deeps of a darkened plain;
His grasp is the grasp of a thousand mills
On the soul of the ripened grain.

His eye is the eye of a dreamer, lit
With the glare of the inner fire,
And he rides his steed with a rough curb bit,
And his steed is his own desire.

His heart is the heart of a king grown great
With the lore that a king must learn;
And his trail is strewn with the love and hate
That a conqueror's arm must earn.

But his star is not as the stars set high
In the blue where the peace gods sleep;
'Tis a red torch low on a black, black sky,
And its shadows are deep—so deep!

THE LITTLE PORTION

By Lee Wilson Dodd

THE high Renaissance understood something of Roman magnificence, but it did not understand St. Francis of Assisi, with his Lady Poverty and his Little Brethren and his Chapel of the Little Portion. If it had understood these humble nobilities, it would hardly have raised above that rude, tiny Chapel of the Little Portion, the great, hollow, dispiriting shell of Vignola's church, St. Mary of the Angels. Never was casket so disproportioned physically to the treasure it contained. The little chapel itself remains, the merest dot in the vastness of Vignola's cold fabric, but the appeal of its lowliness has been banished forever. It has been hung with silver and gold, and plastered upon with mosaic and gilding.

The Blessed Francis would not recognize, could he return to the birthplace of his order, the modest chapel builded up by his own hands, which he ever felt to be fulfilled of more abundant grace, where, too, "a presence oft of angels singing sweet hymns" illumined for him the night watches.

I walked down from Assisi one hot July morning to the somnolent railroad station on the plain. An old friend of mine, Cyril Flood, was stopping a few days at Perugia, and he had promised to come over and see me. He had been at Assisi once, he wrote, and it did not interest him—"but," he added, "I still preserve a certain interest in you, old fellow, so I think I'll drop around." But when a sluggish way train at last crawled in by the deserted station, twenty minutes late, only one passenger alighted—a woman. Cyril, as I had half suspected he would, had failed me. It never does to count on Cyril. Cyril

has disappointed more people, while somehow mysteriously retaining their affection, than any man I have ever known or read of in song or story.

As for the solitary woman who had alighted, a single glance sufficed to tell me that she was young, an American, wealthy, that she knew her way about, and that she might prove talkative if encouraged. I determined not to encourage her, and moved quickly away. "Now that I've come this far," thought I, "I might as well walk on to St. Mary of the Angels."

On entering the church I found it deserted. This I had hoped for. I was in a reflective mood, and the silence and coolness of the vast interior were grateful to me. For once in my life I forgave Vignola his titanic mistake. "After all," I muttered, "I'm rather glad Cyril didn't turn up. Assisi is no place for a cynical novelist. *He* feels that himself." And I began to pace slowly forward, stepping as quietly as I might toward the Chapel of the Little Portion.

I had covered in this way perhaps half the distance between the door and the chapel, when I heard the quick, light click-click of French heels behind me. A woman—a grievance! I turned. It was she of the railroad station. She was alone. She was about to "do the sights." She was certain to speak to me, to ask questions. Farewell solitude, farewell reflection. My annoyance was extreme. Impossible to escape—she was already beside me!

"I beg your pardon," she began—and her voice was neither loud nor unpleasant, as I had feared—"you are an American, aren't you?" I bowed slightly. "Then perhaps," she continued, "you

wouldn't mind if I asked you one or two questions?"

"Not at all," I murmured.

Now that I looked at her more closely, I saw that she was even younger than I had supposed. At the station, where she had worn a light automobile veil—no longer in evidence—I had guessed her to be thirty-two or three; now I realized that she could not be more than twenty-five. She was of more than medium height, slimly built and rather handsome in an obvious fashion. Her lips and cheeks were carefully tinted, her eyebrows penciled, her hair—a dark auburn—probably dyed. Large single pearls were in her ears, and she wore many chains and bracelets and jeweled pins. A faint breath of sandalwood exhaled from her. But in spite of these efforts at commonplaceness, she was not merely commonplace. There was a look about her eyes both of sadness and of intelligence, those twin enemies of the commonplace. It was the expression of her eyes that saved her.

"You are very good," she murmured in return. Then she went on more volubly, but without a trace of the vulgarity I was constantly anticipating: "I have never been here before. And I left my Baedeker on the train. That's why I feel so helpless. Can you direct me to the Porzioncola?"

Inwardly I gasped. Was it possible that this young worldly-seeming—Then the common sense explanation flashed upon me. It was simply the desire of a casual tourist to see a recommended sight. She had read in her Baedeker of the Little Portion of St. Francis. That was it, of course.

But her civil question required a civil answer. "Yes," I replied, and pointed out the minute chapel standing like the forgotten toy of a child beneath Vignola's grandiose dome. She stared at it silently a moment. "Ah," she said, "what a pity they have spoiled it!" I stared at her in frank and increasing amazement. There was a shimmer of tears in her eyes.

By this time I had quite forgotten to be annoyed. Something in this woman, something I could not yet definitely lay

hold of, appealed to me in my professional capacity as an analyst of souls.

"You think they have spoiled it?" I queried. "Why?"

"Because they have," she asserted. "Because they spoil everything with their money—everything!"

"They"? Do you mean by 'they' the Church?"

"No, no!" she quickly exclaimed. "I am speaking of *men*. Four men out of five are enemies of the invisible world. They hate things they can't see and touch and make themselves." Her voice, which did not grow louder, became vibrant with passion. I was literally astounded at such words coming from carmine-tinted lips! This orchid-like young woman—was it possible that she could think and feel?

"You are traveling alone?" I hazarded.

"Yes—that is, I have left my husband in Paris."

"To come to Italy in midsummer?"

"It is warm—but I shall only stay two weeks. I came when I could."

"Did you come straight through?"

"To Perugia—yes. I shall stay in Assisi now till my time is up."

She did not seem to resent these personal questions from a stranger. I had put them, at the risk of offending her, in the hope of chancing upon some clue to this living riddle—some clue, however slight. And had I perhaps found my clue? She was married, a fact her silk gloves had prevented me from discovering quite certainly for myself. But now I knew that she had a husband, and that she had left him in Paris. It was not much to build upon, but taken in connection with the two phrases, "I came when I could" and "till my time is up," I felt that it was something.

"Shall we examine the chapel more closely?" I asked.

She assented without speech and we walked on side by side up to the brilliant façade with the tiny bride cake cupola stuck above it. And there we halted dead. For just within the squat, round-headed doorway of the chapel lay the form of a young peasant woman, face downward on the tessellated pavement,

her arms stretched wide like the arms of a cross. That she was young could only be guessed from a certain slender charm of contour, visible even beneath the rusty black rags which covered her. Her feet, which were pointed toward us, were bare, and we could see their coarse, leatherlike soles creased and caked with the gray dust of the Umbrian roads.

"A penitent," I whispered.

And instantly my arm was clutched by the woman beside me. "Come away," she just breathed—"quickly."

Outside the almost intolerable fire of the sun smote on us like the stunning blare of trumpets. "Come into my carriage," said my companion; "I'll drive you up to your hotel." I followed her into the little *vettura* with its faded umbrella awning, and a sleepy horse urged by a sleepy driver began to crawl along the blinding white road.

"How do you know where I am stopping?" I instantly demanded.

"I know who you are," said the mysterious woman beside me. "You are Robert Beckford. I have read your 'Studies in Italian Mysticism' over and over. I know them almost by heart."

It is impossible to deny that I was quite as much flattered as surprised. "But," I protested, "I have never permitted my photograph to be published—"

"Oh," she broke in, "but I have seen it, just the same. Your friend, Mr. Flood, carries one about with him."

So she knew Cyril! Who was she? There was nothing for it but to ask: "Who are you, please? You know my name. May I know yours?"

"Of course. I am Mrs. Oscar Schwartz." She hesitated an instant. "Are you enlightened?"

I had to admit that I was not. She smiled.

"Poor Oscar!" she exclaimed. "How this would pain him!"

"Ought I to know? But I have been away from America so long. And I am almost a recluse. I can hardly be said to live in my own century."

She nodded. "I understand—perfectly." Then she added: "My husband is rather notorious. He has made an

immense fortune by running gambling dens all through the West. And he is an authority on—pugilism."

I could not detect even a trace of irony in her tone. As she leaned back in her corner of the *vettura* she seemed innocent of the enormities she had uttered.

I felt that she had posed for me a psychological problem more than worthy of my powers of divination. I felt that I must attack it boldly—and from a new angle.

"Have you known Cyril long?" I asked.

"Only three days," she replied.

Only three days—yet his first name did not fall unfamiliarly on her ear!

"You met him at the Hotel Brufani?"

"Yes."

"He is very brilliant and attractive," I suggested.

"Do you think so?" she returned. "I should have thought you would disapprove of him."

"I do," was my laughing response, "entirely. But he is the one human being I disapprove of, whom I can't help loving."

She looked away from me out over the pale quivering fields. When she spoke again her voice had very slightly changed. "That woman in the church—" she said, then paused. And again: "That woman in the church—I can't get her out of my head. Is she lying there yet, I wonder?"

When the long climb up to the rose pink terraces of Assisi had been accomplished and our *vettura* jolted to a full stop before the door of the Hotel Subasio, we descended to find the tall, slim elegance of Cyril Flood framed in the blackness of the doorway. He was clothed in white serge and looked almost startlingly cool and debonair. On his face was the little one-sided, quizzical smile which is almost as famous as the wit it foreshadows. He stepped forward to greet us, straw hat in hand.

"So the predestined have found each other? My congratulations!" And he laughed pleasantly before addressing Mrs. Schwartz, who had not spoken, and whose face I had not quite dared to

scan. "You might have told me you were running away," he said to her; "it has cost me the hire of Pantaleone's motor car to catch up with you!"

"And you are not certain I am worth such a sacrifice?" queried Mrs. Schwartz beside me, with a sudden light, bright ripple of artificial lip laughter.

I greeted Cyril amicably and we passed in, all three, to the grateful gloom of the hotel. And twenty minutes later I had Cyril safely entrapped in my private sitting room, where I had coaxed him into a low, comfortable wicker arm-chair, having previously placed a long, real Havana cigar between his lips.

"Now," I demanded, "no nonsense, you engaging reprobate! What were you doing in Perugia at this time of year? How did you happen to meet Mrs. Oscar Schwartz there? Why have you followed her to Assisi? And who is the woman, anyway? *What* is she? I humble myself before you. I am frankly tortured by curiosity!"

Cyril grinned, and stuck his long legs out before him. "My darling Bob," he replied, "I saw her first. Hands off! I am speaking of course in a literary sense. Far be it from me to accuse a mystic of human passions! But, as one literary brigand to another, Mrs. Oscar is mine. She's the greatest human find of a dull hunting season—and she's going into a book just as soon as I can call her soul my own. *Eccol!*" He puffed delightedly at his cigar.

"As one literary brigand to another," I retorted, smiling, "I repudiate your lien. And besides, I hardly think you are capable of understanding her."

"Indeed!" snorted Cyril. "I've been studying her three days. And that's two days more than I have ever given to the study of any other character in my immortal works."

"I believe you. Please give me the result of your labors."

"My first impression," began Cyril, "was that heaven had taken pity on my youth, exiled among the English spinsters of the Brufani, and had sent me a fellow countrywoman, perhaps no better than she should be, to flirt with. And then I noticed that she was reading that

Walter-Pater-to-the-nth-power volume of yours, 'Studies in Italian Mysticism.' And she was evidently enjoying, even if not comprehending it. This gave me my chance to speak to her, but also it altered my first impression considerably. Well, I spoke to scoff, and I remained to—"

"Prey?"

"Not in the least, if you are guilty of punning. I remained to probe. I couldn't get at the woman at all. And when I found out who she was, it nearly finished me. You know?" he questioned.

"I know."

"The wife of Oscar Schwartz—nicely hand-painted—and reading the incomprehensible Beckford! I was very nearly guilty of a new sensation!"

"Go on," I prompted.

"Figure to yourself," continued Cyril, "that when the noble Oscar married her she was on the musical comedy stage! In fact, she was in the chorus. She hadn't been there long. But there she was. He saved her from that, at any rate, and she seems to be mildly grateful. She seems to have come of rather decent people originally. Her father was a clever ne'er-do-well of a newspaper man, who finally died of drink and left his daughter a set of brains and something less than nothing a year. At the time Oscar met her, it seems to have been a case of outwardly respectable matrimony with a wealthy sporting gentleman, or some less conventional form of alliance with an unnamed admirer, or—genteel starvation. She chose the wealthy sporting gentleman. Starvation didn't appeal to her, and neither, it seems, did the other arrangement."

"No," I said, "it wouldn't, of course."

"Why 'of course'? What do you know about it? But I haven't told you the oddest thing of all. It seems she made Oscar promise, if she married him, to take her to Europe once a year. Now Europe, to Oscar, means Paris, and Paris means Europe. He has brought her to Paris, according to contract, every summer now for the last four years. And she tells me she always manages to steal away from him for about two weeks each summer to travel by herself. He won't

hear of her staying away from him longer than that. Isn't it all immense?"

"But what do you make of her?" I insisted.

"Oh," exclaimed Cyril with a wave of his shortening cigar, "it's all simple enough if you understand women. Naturally, that leaves you out," he added, smiling malignly.

"Naturally. Expound—"

"Well," Cyril went on, "if you want to understand a woman you mustn't probe too deep—or you won't find anything. Women are like certain denizens of the sea—they live at or near the surface. Now Mrs. Schwartz puzzles you, and I confess she puzzled me just at the start. But today I'm in possession of the whole secret."

"Which is—"

"That Mrs. Schwartz is a woman living mentally in reduced circumstances and physically in enlarged circumstances. The result is somewhat incongruous and has the effect of making her seem interesting. But it's a surface effect, after all."

I shook my head. "My chief objection to paradox and epigram is that I never can comprehend them. Please explain as dully as possible."

"Why, don't you see?" Cyril leaned forward to drive his theory home. "Don't you see? She grew up with a poor but worthless father, who gave her a sort of taste for the artistic and literary. Then he died, and she had to struggle among vulgar people with hard times and a wicked world. Then along came Oscar to give her everything that money can buy when spent by a man who hasn't the least idea what you or I could buy with it. In one way she's glad to be safe and well looked after, but in another way she's unsatisfied. And she tries to snatch at a little beauty and culture along the primrose path as she goes. That's all there is to it," ended Cyril, throwing himself back once more to emphasize the finality.

I looked him steadily in the eyes. "Confess," I said, "that you have been making love to her."

"It's the only method of studying a woman."

"Well," was my comment, "I have not been making love to her, but I already know more about Mrs. Schwartz than you could ever possibly divine." And I rose to my feet. "That woman," I asserted, "is like the Little Portion of St. Francis. She was meant to be the modest chapel of a great spiritual life. But she has been so plastered upon by extraneous worldliness—"

I was interrupted by Cyril's laughter. "Oh, piffle, my darling Bob, piffle!" he exclaimed. And he laughed till he cried.

When he had regained his composure, "Promise me one thing," I demanded—"promise me you won't make love to her any more."

Cyril sprang to his feet gaily. "To the rescue, Sir Knight!" Then he walked to the door and turned. "You have a nerve, haven't you?" he said. "How about lunch?"

We descended together to the shadowy foyer of the hotel, and there I was met by a cablegram. The instant it was put into my hands—yes, before I had opened the envelope, I knew that my elder brother, a successful business man in Pittsburg, was dying, and that I should have to return immediately to America to look after his and my own affairs. And at once Cyril, who is really admirable at such a crisis, took charge of me; and almost before I was aware that I had started, I found myself leaving Assisi by the last afternoon train to catch at Foligno the through night express from Ancona to Naples.

One year later I returned again to Assisi.

The year of my absence had been for me a busy and harassing period. I had been plunged for a time into an alien current of life, from which I could not readily escape. Now at last I had escaped. I could return to my solitude and my studies. I was free.

It was again mid-July, an almost incandescent day, when I set foot on the platform of the little station and was greeted as a long lost brother by Giovanni Acosta, general factotum of the Hotel Subasio. He assured me my old room was prepared for me, and into his

eager hands I delivered my baggage. But I did not drive up with him to the rose pink terraces which I once more gazed at with all the rapture of an exile who has come home. No; instead of doing so, and greatly to Giovanni's astonishment, I set forward afoot, turned left across the railroad track, and walked straight on to Vignola's church, St. Mary of the Angels.

And this I did as the result of a slowly gathering wave of recollection, which now bore me steadily onward to the very presence of the Chapel of the Little Portion. It had been months since any thought of Mrs. Oscar Schwartz, however casual, had visited me. But as I had neared Assisi on the train her image had suddenly flashed vividly upon my consciousness—and had remained. I found myself wondering how I could possibly have forgotten her. I found myself wondering whether Cyril had followed my outspoken suggestion, whether he had done the decent and gentlemanly thing. And if he had not—

In short, it was not the memory of the blessed Francis but the memory of Mrs. Oscar Schwartz which, at the very moment of my arrival in Assisi, had drawn me back to stand before the Porzioncola—to stand there a moment and to remember how feelingly she had said: "What a pity they have spoiled it!"

Vignola's great, sophisticated church seemed empty when I entered it, but as

I slowly advanced toward the chapel one of the younger brethren of the order stepped out from behind the chapel in his coarse habit, and came forward softly to meet me, finger on lips. I stood still, impressed by his manner, and waited. When he reached me he leaned to my ear and muttered, in the thick dialect of a Neapolitan peasant: "Go gently—don't disturb her—she has come from very far; we don't understand, but we feel she is doing a great penance before Our Lady."

At first, though I took in the sequence of his words, I did not comprehend them. Then, following his glance, I saw at some distance from me, within the doorway of the Little Portion, the dark form of a woman lying face downward on the pavement, her arms stretched wide like the arms of a cross.

I stared, and my throat tightened strangely; my knees shook.

Fascinated by that prostrate figure, I endeavored to tiptoe forward, to force myself nearer to the penitent that I might examine—

And suddenly I turned and rushed headlong from the church. I had seen nothing. It was a sort of sacrilege for me to know. Yet I knew.

That night I slept in Florence. I did not return to Assisi for many weeks. When at length I did return, a letter from Cyril was waiting for me.

It announced his marriage to the daughter of a Viennese composer.



"AN author? What has he written?"
"A cure for insomnia."



WHEN you laugh at your troubles you prevent your friends from doing so.

THE TECHNIQUE OF LOVE

By E. C. Venables

WHEN a man is famous and unmarried the world usually fits him with a scandal or a romance. Trenchard had escaped both equipments by virtue of his remarkable ugliness. His celibacy needed apparently no other explanation—even to the most mawkish imagination. He was short, fat, scantily bald, but what was perhaps more effective was his devitalized physique. He was nervous and unhealthily colored, and his thin hair fell apathetically out of place when he moved. His eyes were good, but did nothing to redeem the commonplace irregularity of the other features. Artists of a certain sort were fond of discovering traces of his genius behind this concealment, but he, the greatest artist of all, could never find it.

He said this of himself quite simply, accepted it as he did his fame, a thing that was and therefore by all sensible men was to be as exactly reckoned as possible. He spoke of it as a misfortune, spoke of it very seldom, and laughed—and with very human bitterness—at the affectation of those fellow craftsmen of his who pretended to see him otherwise than as he so clearly saw himself.

This was all as it should be—a clear, sound intellect looking at a fact clearly and accepting it as a fact and therefore indestructible and not to be disguised, but to be put up with and made use of if possible.

But that this clearness of intellectual vision should have been acquired after struggle and disappointment, a thing born of resignation and not native to the quality of his spirit, is so out of keeping with the man as I knew him that I have

never been able to understand it. Yet there is his own word that it was so, and he never lied with either words or colors.

I was spending part of a summer with him at his camp in the White Mountains when I got his word about it. An interviewer from some Western periodical had spent a night there, and later—about a fortnight—he sent the article for his approval. It came up from the village in the afternoon mail and Trenchard read it after dinner. When he finished he tossed it over to me and began to play *solitaire*, while I read, on the table between us. The article was full of personalities. It was headed, "A Day With Trenchard," and told what he ate, played—chiefly *solitaire*—and above all how he looked—"not a handsome man," the writer conceded, "but"—and then a column of invisibilities he had seen. Long after I had read it through I sat looking covertly at the Trenchard there before me and marveling at the mendacious capability of my fellow creatures. For some reason Trenchard always preferred strong high lights, and the living room of the camp was lighted by a big lamp hung from the center of the roof. While I read he sat directly beneath it at the table playing *solitaire*. He sat there, too, while he talked, except when he rose to walk up and down the floor or look into the mantel glass over the fireplace.

"Curious, isn't it?" he asked, looking up and seeing I was not reading.

"No; commonplace," I answered.

"Rot, anyhow," he continued, looking down again at the cards. "They all do it. Some of them, I suppose, believe it themselves." He began to shuffle the cards. "It isn't very hard to believe,

you know. I once believed something of the sort myself," he went on, dealing the cards anew. "But then it is easier to believe that sort of thing about yourself than about another."

He paused in his game, lighted a cigar and resumed. "It's a curious thing to talk of, but I've studied this human flesh so long that it seems insignificant to me. I've learned what a liar it is. Once in my life I thought it was the most despicable thing in the world. Since I have been learning to estimate it properly—and so got famous.

"I was never vain," he explained that one time he ever spoke of the matter. "I only thought my eyes and the looking glass lied. That is the sort of intellectual falsehood most people tell. I thought I did not see myself as others saw me—that there was a something about my appearance invisible to me that redeemed it in the eyes of others. You have no idea how many people harbor a similar delusion. I did not until I began to make portraits. Yet there must have been an innate honesty about me even then, because I fell in love with the only woman who ever had the bad manners to show me clearly that I was physically repulsive. She had a keener appreciation of my gifts, too, than anyone else, and it all happened long before my recognition. You can see how the combining of these two perceptions gave a piquant flavor to a man-woman friendship. Besides—as you see, she must have been rare to combine so—she was an altogether flashing, clear-eyed, radiant creature. And I fell in love.

"If things had fallen out otherwise I would have painted her, and that should have been my greatest portrait. There would have been no need for all you critics quarreling over the matter. She had no more knowledge of painting than I had of mineralogy, but I have never shivered before any critic as I did before her when I showed her the sketches I was doing then for magazines. I have often thought since of some of her criticisms and how true they were. She had that far glancing sanity that is the quality of high genius, that ability to

pluck out the heart of any mystery and thereby render it no mystery at all but a matter of luminous simplicity. She could do this with a book or a picture or a style of coiffure. Yet she could neither play nor write nor paint well. She could do only the natural things, sing, dance and copy the things she saw about her in a crude, natural way, with words, sounds or colors. A gift, I think, would have spoiled her. It would have upset the balance, perverted that splendid sanity of hers, aged her by a thousand years, brought her from Dionysius to Wagner.

"Well, then, I fell in love with her, and in a certain sense I have never fallen out. I think of her perhaps once a week, but then I never think so of other women at all."

He broke off and began to deal out swiftly the cards he held for a solitaire tableau. His brows were drawn down, quite hiding from me his good eyes and the flesh beneath his chin creased heavily against his collar. "It was," he went on, while his hands darted swiftly over the cards, "a very exciting game, I suppose; only I was playing too heavily. I never knew whether I was damned or triumphant. She used to shudder, I believe, sometimes when she looked at me. She had a little trick of frowning—just a line between her eyebrows when she looked at me—and telling me my scarf was untied that meant volumes to my sensitiveness. I was abnormally sensitive then. That frown, I knew, was for every inch of me she could see. Then again I've held her for hours while I talked to her and heard her give a little sigh like a waking baby when I ended. And I could always hold her by a letter. I sometimes think that if I had gone away for a year I could have won her. Do you remember Wilkes's boast that by an hour's start with a woman he could best the handsomest man in England? Wilkes was right, but very few other men would have been. I held her so by word of mouth, by letter for three years. That perhaps is my greatest intellectual feat.

"Man," he cried, throwing down the cards when I laughed, "that is not hy-

perbole! For three years my brain never received an idea that I did not first test as fit for her acceptance and then give her. I painted what was left after I had used them so, and those were the years, too, when I first won recognition."

He got up nervously, tumbling the cards in a heap on the table, and went over to the fireplace. He could scarcely see his face in the mantel glass and stood on tiptoe to look into it. His short, stout legs shook as he strained upward. "I haven't changed," he said, suddenly turning around to me. "A little gray perhaps, and a little stouter here"—he touched his throat—"but otherwise I am pretty much what I was. Yet I, as I am, held her for three years—nearly won her in the end, I sometimes think.

"Yes, it was a feat," he went on, seating himself, "a laborious one and bitter. I believe I saw pretty clearly how everything truly stood. It seemed to me then a pretty frail barrier that held me back. I've learned greater respect for it now since I've made my fortune by painting it, but how I used to rage against it then, this barrier of the flesh! It helped my art, too. I might have become a realist, an anatomist. I always had a weakness there. But I studied human flesh then as a man studies the weakness of the enemy he hates and fears most in the world, and I learned it, charted all those little chinks where the soul peeps through. I am not complaining. There was no soul, no genius, burnt out in those years. A little youth perhaps, but youth has to burn out somehow, and this was all in the development of me. I owe a great deal to those years—more than any man who writes about my pictures can ever learn from them. They were not hopeless years, either. I have letters—not in any desk; I burned them all long ago—but phrases, sentences in my memory, that tell me now how near I did come to winning, after all. In one of them she told me pretty plainly that I had won and to come to her. If I hadn't gone, perhaps— But I did go, and—and my scarf was crooked or something, and she frowned. I lost again. In truth she looked at me and

was disgusted, I suppose. What I remember most is the sentence telling me to come."

He picked up the cards again and began shuffling them in his restless fingers. "This will sound very absurd to you, I suppose," he went on, "but in a way I did win finally. At least, I couldn't have lost less. I might have lost everything, for I was very much in love, mark you—very young and very ambitious and very much in love. In the end it fell out in this way: I sat across the table from her at dinner. Somebody had taken her in, whom I've forgotten. It wasn't the man she married. He was one of the smooth haired sort that smell of soap, as Pinero says. She was diagonally across the table from me. What I tell you about the details of that dinner I've found out since. I went back to the house, into the dining room, sat at the table again and—well, found out the true story. But I knew nothing of these facts that night. It was just before my second trip to Europe. I had learned that morning that I was going. I had finished my Brawley portrait and it had been accepted, and my uncle had relented in consequence. You see, it was the very day my future opened to my eyes. The talent in that picture and the public appreciation of it and the certainty that I should have every advantage the world could give me afterward had all dawned to me suddenly. I felt greater then in the future than I've felt since in any present. The thought of Europe thrilled me. I had all a young painter's enthusiasm for old pictures."

He paused and began to pace back and forward across the floor, talking as he walked. "I told you," he continued, "that I am now what I was then. Of course that isn't true in any respect. But the vital difference—and in this case the only difference that matters—is that I had enthusiasms then; I haven't now. Understand that it is not complaint. I honestly believe that my best work is to come—but I know now just how good that work is going to be. That is the tremendous difference, my friend. When we get that knowl-

edge we may be happy, but we are no longer young. The enthusiasms are past. Remember that difference. I had enthusiasms then; I haven't now when you see me here before you.

"But *revenons*. That dinner!" He took several turns in silence smiling vacantly before him. "I've since found out," he began softly, "that it was mostly a matter of shadows—shadows and enthusiasms. I didn't know anything about shadows, but I've studied them, too, since. It is what every painter thinks he learns first and generally learns last. It is the foundation of all color if you look at it properly—that combination of light and shade—but most painters think it an arbitrary matter to be shifted at will—omitted altogether if you choose. They are really the great eternal verities of painting. That room was lighted by pink-shaded candles on the table and by a row of dim lights behind the cornice. Just behind my chair—it was a large dinner and the table greatly lengthened—was a tall, carved oak screen before the door to the butler's pantry. The screen shaded my seat from the cornice lights. I can see it all very plainly now, though I did not understand it then. I had not, I suppose, taken much notice of such things that night. I was the table length from her against the black screen in the shadow with the soft flesh-colored candlelight athwart my face from my elbow. Can you understand? I can now perfectly."

He paused and resumed his pacing to and fro. I tried to fancy the scene as he saw it but I could not. His squat figure and heavy profile were too frightfully clear in the broad glare of the upper light.

"I can talk!" He laughed. "I can talk and I can paint—those are my gifts, both abundantly given. And that night I was fired with every feeling that can loosen a man's tongue. You remember Wilde's epigram of him who could dominate a London dinner party? I've always distrusted that epigram because I dominated that dinner party, and I was a callow boy who had done nothing but paint one very mediocre portrait—and,

I honestly believe, would never have done more but for what happened at that table. I forget how I won that eminence. The host was a director of the Metropolitan—poor chap, he died shortly after—and he gave the talk somehow a flick toward art, and then I took control. I talked well—I must have. New York is not London, but no dinner table listens to a boy unless what he says is well worth listening to, and they listened. Do you remember Faulkner? He had just died then, and someone had got up a sale of his unfinished things to help his sister, who had been dependent on him. I had known Faulkner, and I knew what he had suffered and what he had done and what he would have done if he had not tried to paint sixty hours a week in an icy studio. The talk turned to him, and I told them what I knew. I was burning that night with youth, success, enthusiasm, and I turned the whole force of the spirit in me on my friendship and my art. Success opened my heart to every generous feeling a man's heart can feel, and mine was wide that night and Faulkner and Faulkner's art filled it. When the high gods give a man his hour they know no stint. That was my hour, divinely appointed, once given only.

"I knew she was listening—everyone was; but I truly did not think of her as listening. I was above that; at most it was a subconscious knowledge, and I knew I was talking well—though I was above that, too, in a way, but I did not connect the two until I met her eyes across the table. She was leaning a little forward, her hands held beneath the cloth. When her glance touched mine her eyes-fired. She did not smile and did not shift her glance, but looked on full into my eyes as steadily, as calmly, as if she did not see; but if ever a woman told a man she loved him she somehow told me then.

"You see, it was the lights. I did not know, of course. I had waited three years for that glance, and when it came, why, I thought the barrier of flesh had been lifted. That is what the high gods give when a man's appointed hour comes. They may cast him down afterward, but

it does not much matter. I've told you I was young. I thought the barrier was lifted. I did not know it was shadows. I was as far above shadows as angels above men. I was soaring among the clouds of youth and art. But youth passes and art grows bitter and old and shadows remain—the eternal verities. I did not know then. But what does it matter? Fools' paradise or that of wise men, it was a paradise—and I lived in it for my hour. I have struck the stars with my sublime head. *Cela suffit*—for a fool or a wise man, either.

"The dinner broke up. She went out on the opposite side of the room and I did not see her. We were going somewhere afterward—to a play, I believe. When we came out from smoking the carriages were waiting. She passed me as I stood on the street steps and I followed her to her carriage. I got in with her. It was dark as Erebus—only the flash of the street lamps as we passed the corners. Again, you see, the shadows! I think I had first made love to her two years before.

"Is it true?" I asked her.

"She did not answer. I could see that she was not looking at me but straight ahead through the darkness.

"Is it true?" I asked again.

"She stirred and sighed ever so faintly. 'Oh, I can't tell,' she said. 'It was, in there at the time, but I've never seen you like that. You were so totally different.'

"And now, here," I asked—"is it true now?"

"I haven't seen you since I saw you in there looking like that and—oh, yes, it is true now."

He broke off and walked again to the mantel and again strained upward to the mirror and stared in it. Suddenly he dropped to his heels and wheeled to me. "I've often wondered whom she kissed in that carriage," he said. "It wasn't myself. All the passion I had dreamed of for her was burning in her

under my arms. Against me her body throbbed with my pulse. I felt her choking breath gasp in that first long kiss. But it was not me she kissed so. I did not know it. I am glad I did not. If I had I know I should have killed her.

"So give the high gods. It was my hour. It was the only time I have ever felt a woman's body yield to my arms or a woman's lips seek mine. It was her hour, too—whomever she kissed. She can never have another.

"Our carriage stopped, the last of a long line, before the theater. She drew back, leaving her hand lying in mine. Outside, the sidewalk blazed under the sizzling calcium light—remorseless, shadowless.

"We are here," she said softly, and drew aside her drapery for me to pass to the carriage door.

"I raised her hand and kissed it and let it fall, and whispered, 'Good-bye.'

"She turned and stared.

"I shrank back in the corner and covered my face with my arm. When I lowered it she was gone and the carriage was passing slowly down a dark street."

He finished and thrust out his fingers into the tumbled cards, flicking them about the table, saying nothing. Presently he looked at me with a laugh. "You can't very well tell me," he said, "that I was wise not to get out and stand there before her under that flaring white light, can you?"

He was in just such a light then—fat, white, devitalized. "When did you next see her?" I asked.

"I never saw her," he answered. "I sailed in two days. But I might just as well have got out. Later, quite innocently, with the other things she returned my photograph."

Suddenly the amazing cynicism of the thing struck me and I burst out laughing. Trenchard gravely continued to play solitaire.



ABSOLUTELY uncalled for—the old maid.

THE STRANGER

By Herman Marcus

IT was December, and although still early in the afternoon, twilight had fallen over Paris. The streets were crowded in spite of the bad weather and the dark. A stranger to the city walked along the Quai de la Tournelle. He was a large man. He wore a heavy coat and a round fur hat. He had a black beard and carried a thick cane. These things gave him a forbidding air. But on seeing his face one would have been surprised. It seemed to say: "To be strong is to be great; to be kind is to be grand."

He stopped walking and leaned upon the river wall, looking toward Notre Dame. He stood a long time with his head buried in his hands.

Twilight had become night when the stranger resumed his walk. At the Pont Sully he again stopped. On all sides men were lifting their hats. Why? There was no procession, no noble, no king to be seen; whom then were they all saluting? At this moment a hearse approached the bridge. It was a very poor hearse, but it had two men in black on the box. It was drawn by a broken horse and moved very slowly. To this hearse all raised their hats—a last tribute to one who, no matter what he had been, was now that which all respect. It was the admission that this unknown was irresistible. It was the homage of the living to the dead.

The hearse was followed by no carriage. Behind it walked a woman wearing a shabby black dress. She wore no veil, and one could see that she was about thirty. She walked slowly, with her head very low. The stranger gazed at this woman. He took a step forward, and stopped—seeming to hesitate. Then he walked resolutely in her direction.

He placed himself beside her, but a few steps behind. He had removed his hat. She regarded him in wonder with a look of gratitude unexpressible.

In silence they traversed Paris. The weight of great sadness more and more oppressed the man. The awful solemnity of this last salute from the people of this world to one who had left it became almost unbearable. If these were his emotions, who was but a stranger, what were hers—to whom this event was everything? This woman in black did not weep—despair does not weep. But from time to time she might have been seen to tremble as if from fright.

It was a long way to Père la Chaise, but once there things went quickly. There was little ceremony at the grave. One would not have said the coffin was lowered—one would have said it was dropped. The men who had ridden on the hearse had no fee to expect, and it was very cold. One of them had stood a lantern at the edge of the open ditch, but by its poor yellow light it was difficult to see if all the earth was replaced. The woman remained standing. Her face was one of those which does not question, which does not complain, but which simply suffers. She held a small crucifix in her hands, but she did not pray. When all was done, she knelt and laid a small bunch of violets on the fresh yellow earth. Then she rose, turned slowly toward the man, who had remained a few feet away, and held out her hand. He took it and said: "You will pardon a stranger?" "From my heart I will thank a friend," she answered. If it had been necessary for him to speak again, the stranger could not have done so.

THE TRUNK IN THE ATTIC

A Department for the Revival of the Art of Letter Writing

Conducted by Louise Closser Hale

[In the November number we made announcement of this department and what we proposed to do. Our offer was to pay \$150—fifty dollars each, respectively—for the three best love, friendship or human interest letters. See the November issue for details.]

I WAS perfectly right about the love letters. I am convinced now that there are more of them than anything else in the world. I even believe that there is one written to every potato consumed. This is not romantic, but it is the best way that I can bring it home to you. Think how many potatoes you eat!

It is the jilted who write most persistently. I suppose it's the desire to have the last word. And yet, when we have sent the very last word, how we wait for an answer to it! The difference between the men and the women is that the men post what they write, and the women don't. I suppose it is our only outlet; our peers go out, put one foot on the brass rail—and forget. Toward morning they can even babble of their rejected suit, and not be despised. But we must hide our passion for some unworthy creature, or be laughed at.

Here is one of the letters that were never sent. I wish I had been there to make her up before he came for tea. He would have felt like a centenarian by contrast.

To the man who went away

I have just come in from a long tramp, and the crisp, cool sweetness of the spring air is still clinging to me. The ground I walked over was all yellow with dandelions, and the grass between was so fresh—so young. Something of the resurrection glory seems to have come in with me and floats like incense

through the little room. That is why I have flung a scarf over the mirror on the dressing table. I cannot look at my face, so aged and lined, when my heart is full of spring.

Dear, how often the lines, "Blessed are they among whom I was not," ring through my mind! Thank God, you have never known how the petty daily worrying and fretting and scrimping in the lives of the almost poor grind like sand in the soul and rub the youth out of our faces.

I saw you this morning on your return, when you passed the house; my eyes feasted and shrank at the same time. How splendidly vital, how well cared-for you are! When I looked at your strong white hands I hid my roughened brown ones. You see, dear, that is one thing the world does for us. Out there it is not enough to do; one must also *be*. But what do the flowers in the sweet old garden care if my nails are broken and my hands are brown? They turn their bright faces to me for all that—and I forget.

Dear, I am so proud of you. I walked on the hillside today, where all the trees have been cut down and the splendid houses of the rich are going up. Prosperous men are blazing that new trail up there, and you belong to their world. You are one of them now. But, oh, don't forget how the wild grape used to trail through the branches, and the arbutus used to bloom under the brown leaves. Walking along the new road,

I felt as if you and I had met somewhere in a dream and were passing through the memory of that old wood together.

It does not seem possible that you and I are the same age. Oh, why was not I also placed in a favored nook in God's big garden, where I, too, might have grown and expanded and bloomed and not shriveled in the shade? But I am glad to live because I can love you, though I must hide the ashes of roses deep, deep in my heart, even as I must hide these pages from all eyes. Tomorrow I shall send you a letter, a stiff, formal little note, inviting you to have tea with mother and me on Wednesday. And you will accept in the kindness of your heart, thinking it a duty you owe your old neighbors. If I could only know that while you are reading that commonplace note from a faded, commonplace woman, your thoughts would go back for an instant to those morning days when we walked through the blue and gold world together and I was as you are still—young, young, young! It would mean so much if only for a heartbeat's time I could, in your thoughts, be in that reachless garden guarded by a sword.

JEAN.

But we women are not limited to love-lorn plaints. We can be cheery on occasions as the second letter proves. We can write without any mention of men beyond casual references to those who serve us, such as Poles—and James Huneker. I do not mean to class our distinguished *littérateur* with Polish gardeners. But if Mr. Huneker does not serve us—and delightfully—then we are not familiar with the right employment bureau. He can be secured, and, unlike the Poles, we can put him on our shelves and never let him go.

From one lady farmer to another

DEAR SISTER IN THE FAITH:

First—I have had no cook; second—I have had company; third—I am building a garage; fourth—also a garden wall; fifth—the sewer backed up; sixth—I have two litters of puppies (one numbered thirteen); seventh—we have

two new "gents" of Polish nationality, willing to work but understanding no English; meaning must be conveyed by pantomime; eighth—I have a new "Scottie"; ninth—she has unnumbered fleas; tenth—all the pestiferous not to be forgotten nor slid-over details of the simple life, including late potatoes, flower garden, etc., without number or end.

The above is in lieu of an excuse for being such an ill bred person as not to write and tell you what a very good, full and interesting twenty-four hours I had at your farm. Possibly, being a leader of the simple life yourself, you will sympathize and overlook. Really, I have kept my nose above water, but that's all. If the people, the dear people who think I have "nothing to do in the country," would only leave me alone! But they come out and butt in on all my nicely planned days, and if I ever get time to paint or read again it will be because I've shot a few well meaning friends and relations. I wonder if the report that I had gone to China on an indefinite visit would be any more culpable a lie than "not at home" is in town?

By the way, I brought two new books of Huneker's home with me, and haven't had a glimpse at them. Do you know him? If you don't, get busy, because I know you'd like him. He's simply corking! I always keep Phyfe and a dictionary handy, because there are more words in his vocabulary than I ever encountered before; but he's very entertaining. I think you probably know him already. If you don't, get "Promenades of an Impressionist," "Egoists," "Overtones," or "Iconoclasts." The latter two are my new ones, and I've only peeked at them; but they promise to be just as good as the others.

Well, so long. I've got to go and show the Polanders where to dig gravel—also dip the "Scottie" again. How's your corn crop coming—and the chickens? Give my love to your mother—also the dogs.

THE MISTRESS OF INCUBATOR VILLA.

This is a sensible letter, and causes us to speculate over the necessity of any of

us feeling lonesome. For instance, would not a dog with fleas be an excellent substitute for the platonic friend whom the lonely girl in the next letter undoubtedly loves? It is too banal to reiterate that work is the cure for every sorrow. And even as I was about to do it I put a question mark after the statement; for I have reached the stage when I admit two sides to the shield. Work sops up the blood of the wounds, though the pain remains—I take it. Time heals them, and our own pride cunningly paints over the scars that we may present a fair appearance to the world—and invite further stabs. However, dipping the "Scottie" is the best sop yet.

From a lonely girl to a platonic friend

DEAR FRIEND:

It is wonderful what a different view dawn puts on things! I no sooner awoke this morning than I realized what a foolish person I was last night. In the first place, I abused the term of friendship most cruelly, especially after coaxing you to tell me everything. It is funny how we start out with such good intentions sometimes and wind up in a manner altogether adverse to them. The ulterior reason for your visit was your search for sympathy, and I was only too willing to give sympathy. I had no idea that your confidences would have such an effect upon me. But when you spoke so protectingly and lovingly of H—it made me feel a little lonely.

You must not conclude that my burst of feeling was prompted by jealousy. Now that I am able to think clearly again, not being blinded by my own petty, selfish thoughts, let me speak very frankly to you. I recollect that you said something about that woman not letting you alone, in spite of the fact that you had resorted to the subterfuge of hinting at your coming marriage. Is it possible that you cannot assert yourself to the extent of establishing your own freedom and happiness? How preposterous! The trouble with you is that you are weak. You fall a victim, under the slightest provocation, to the dictates of a stronger will than your own. You

lack initiative, and even though it sounds unkind, dignity, too. As a true friend I must tell you the truth, as it appears to me, about yourself. I have never in my life (and it seems to me I have lived a century) come across a man as inconsequential as you are. I wish you would lose some of that boyish hankering after *lovely womankind* and become a man—a man of consequence and responsibility. It seems to me, after your experience and all it cost you, you should acquire a more settled mien. I don't care if you hate me for these words, if they will only have the desired effect. I am the friend now, and nothing but the friend, don't forget that.

Yours sincerely,

ALICE.

One can deduce much of life from this letter, but the most evident fact is that Plato has more to answer for than any philanderer who ever broke the heart of a woman. He is the original "time server." In his name young men whose best girls are away kill evenings with hopeful young damsels, young women with one string to a platonic beau and another twisted around a wedding ring find that both have snapped, and the married guilelessly exchange partners for the tea hour, until the rendezvous is discovered.

Platonic friendship is but the holding on until a more satisfactory turn of affairs presents itself. As a charming woman said recently: "I never had but one platonic friend—and I married him."

From a girl to the man who wishes to marry her

MY DEAR CARL:

It was ridiculously foolish of me to allow you to leave me yesterday under the impression you had, and I am afraid you will never forgive me. But, dear boy, you looked so much in earnest. And, to be truthful, I enjoyed the way you ordered me to come to you. We women are such silly things that we love to be primitively batted with a club, and you did it so beautifully. Then, too, after you had come all the way from

New York, I hadn't the heart to be unkind.

But you know perfectly well, Carl, that I would make you wildly miserable, and that we would end in the divorce court as the sparks fly upward. I enjoyed being "bossed" yesterday, and I let you hold me, yes, and kiss me, too, then, for the novelty of the thing. But ordinarily I would refuse, out of mere stubbornness, if you commanded me to do this or that. I will not say what I would do if you touched me against my will.

You are a dear person, the dearest I know, and it might interest you to know that you are the only man who has ever held me in his arms, the only one whose mouth has ever touched mine—not that these facts prove anything; I have never been in the mood before, and probably shall not be again. Usually my hair stands on end with rage if a man unexpectedly touches my hand.

I wonder if you can forgive me for letting you think I cared? It was a dastardly thing to do, and I have no excuse to offer except that you appealed to me somehow when you held out your arms and commanded me, "Come," so I just went. Thank your lucky stars that you did not say, "Marry me now," for in all likelihood I should have done so, and then—today!

Dear boy, I *wish* you didn't want to marry me! I wish you would marry someone else and be just my good friend. Do forgive me for being so foolish, and write me at once.

Affectionately,

JEANNE.

This letter is not one that I encourage, understand me. Accepting a proposal of marriage in order to get kissed is not honorable, especially when there are other ways of bringing it about. But there is a certain satisfaction in Jeanne's even momentary dismissal of Carl. It is sweet to dismiss them, is it not, and the letter is printed that more of us may emulate her. Unfortunately, with some finesse, the writer is offering the aspirant every inducement to return. But the joke may yet be on Jeanne. Carl is

a German, I fancy, and financiering is much more successful with a Teuton than finessing. He may not "get" this until I have expounded the contents of the letter. Yet there is hope. With only a rudimentary grasp of what she wants, he may win Jeanne. When next you call, take the club along, Carl.

From a younger to an older woman

DEAREST MARGARET:

Do not feel so bad about what has befallen me. It is not the first time that a man has thrown over one woman in order to marry another. I had only love to give him. She had that, and money and position. How could I hope to win?

Do not blame yourself as you are doing because of the fact that you showed me there was another world lying over and beyond the old mountain where you found me—a poor little drudge, working there in my stepmother's summer hotel. I shall never cease thanking you for this, nor for teaching me that there was a being shut up within me which nobody need stifle or abuse. At first I thought if there really was such a being in me it would be of no use to bring it to life. I felt that it would be only stillborn, or live just long enough to haunt me forever afterward, like Cousin May's two-day-old baby. Then you made its birth possible and beautiful by giving me the chance to come here and study.

You say that I am "so bitter it is killing" you. You reproach yourself with having "transplanted a little wild flower only to see it trampled in the dust." Dear, I had rather be a broken, discarded flower lying in the dust of life than a whole mountain of laurel rooted fast in gray old moss. I am *not* bitter, Margaret. I have *not* grown cynical; I have only grown up. I wouldn't, if I might, be again the ignorant, half-alive girl I was when you found me up there on the mountainside singing hymns, just because I had to sing somewhere and dared not do it around the house. For a mad, foolish while I was willing to give up all my career just to sing to my "nest." Now I mean to sing to the "wide world" if it will listen to me. So

cheer up and be as philosophical as I am. I have you and my work left.

BETTY.

P. S.—Midnight.

Come to me, Margaret; I need you!

Although I am rather proud of the selection from the women contributors this month, in that there is very little trickling treacle, I am alarmed at their continued efforts toward dissimulation. The first opens her heart, but in a sealed envelope; the third and fourth are doing their best to be something that they are not, and the fifth can't even tell the truth to another woman, until, woman-like, she reaches the postscript.

And this leads on to another observance of the vagaries of my sex: when we do tell the truth we always wait until midnight. If two women give over an evening to confidences, nothing of real import is divulged until after the clock strikes twelve. Then we begin to cry, and lay our hands on Bibles and confess. The next morning we are our cautious selves again, eying each other coldly. And some of us wish we had gone to bed at an early hour.

Perhaps it is a mistake to let our enemy, man, know of this weakness. If any reader notices a tendency on the part of her fond lover to extend the call until the witching hour, ask if he has read our February number, and be forewarned.

See how simple are the masculine letters that follow. I am putting two Americans together and following them up with a whole series from an Italian of title. Which would you women rather have? Not that there is a chance for you with any of them except the nobleman. I am sure Jim is for one alone, and that one isn't the poor scribe.

From a man to a man friend

EUREKA, UTAH, Oct. 31, 1911.

DEAR MACK:

I'm working in dry ground again. Yes, I've cut it all out, signed and sworn—I'm going back to the alfalfa. I've made my last investment in the froth and headaches, and the red and black have no more charms for me. It's little

Jamie for a stake, and I'll cast my next William Jennings Bryan in the home town.

Of course you will tell me that you knew it was in me—knew that I was a true fissure and that sort of junk. Nothing to it; the fact is that I'm lonesome. I fell for the little memory that the booze hadn't eaten out of the gray matter.

There's only ten day men in the works now—dagos and Finns and such—no more thinks on a whole shift than there are in a keg of nails. After you left I got to sitting around alone at lunch time, and while the coffee warmed over the snuffs I took to gazing down the stope sort of dopey and the quiet got to my head and I began seeing pictures of things that happened long before I got discontented and hit the trail for the mines.

Say, Mack, you and I were sure enough pards from the first. You stayed by me and kept me on the right drift when I started rambling, and I've been planning to follow you ever since you left; but somehow I never had enough left over after pay day to satisfy the boarding missus, let alone get a pasteboard on the R. R. And a while ago I met a drummer who'd been down among the irrigating ditches where I came from. We had some talk about the folks I used to know—some of the old ones have stoped out, and he spoke of a good many new prospects that I didn't remember—but he mentioned that girl I used to tell you about, Mack, and since then I've been able to see only one figure in the movings down there in the dark. Old fellow, I've got the signal and I'm on the way to the surface at last.

That little girl has been waiting all these years for me to come back. I wrote her a letter, got the answer today; it's all right. She said it didn't make any difference with her if I failed to bring home the big stack of chips I vowed I should when I went away.

She's all first class, Mack, clean, straight shipping. I had a bonanza and didn't realize it, but I'm going in now and take out my real fortune. A fellow will usually pass up good croppings to

go picking around in the country rock for nuggets. It was the same with me, but in my wanderings I found one thing that shows up so well in the assay that it is worth all the years spent in these hills—your friendship, old pal.

As ever,

JIM.

P. S.—We're going to locate and file the papers in about a month; come down and witness the signatures.

J.

And here is another. It might be Jim married, but it isn't. It's Wade; and in writing us he admits that it is different from the usual type of letter writing. Still I think there is a good deal of love in what this man relates, and the moral is "feed the brutes," if you want to keep your hold upon them.

From a husband to his wife

DEAREST:

You have been away from home three weeks, and I care not now who makes the laws, nor who writes my country's songs, so long as my wife bakes the puddings.

I feared when you left that I was developing symptoms of La Grippe, but it isn't that at all; it's La Grabbe. I'm grabbing everything coming my way, even to turkey and mince pies handed me over the line fence by the neighbors; they are "certainly good to me."

Mother compliments me on how neat (nit) I keep my kitchen. I fill and trim my lamps in the morning, after the style of the wise virgin, and trifle with the coalhod, straddling the partition which separates the "hard" from the "soft" while it is day already yet.

I am growing rather partial to, and in time think I shall really grow to be fond of, that Domestic Fruit Laxative and Constitutional Jelly you prepared a pot of before you absconded. As with olives, grapenuts and caviar, it necessitates an acquired taste; rhubarbically speaking, it's green goods (canned) to

doughnuts (stale), and as I stand (it's more prudent to eat standing when short of napkins) against the cold marble slab of the sideboard I can imagine myself again in one of those "hellup yourself" restaurants on the avenue.

Prunes are a worthy and healthful article of diet, but one prefers them inviolate; when they "arrive" in bake-shop pies masquerading as the succulent blackberry, one feels righteously inclined to resent the imposition and let go a "cuss word." My soups may lack distinction, but they have the merit of not scalding one's palate. Of reheated, rewarmed and re-rewarmed kartoffel, I have had a sufficiency, thank you. I concocted one dish so dismal and repellent that, fearing that to partake of it might export me to the Promised Land ahead of schedule time, I advisedly dropped it from my menu.

I have learned, by tough experience, that the most opportune time to wash a dish is immediately, before the mush and squash pie and that loud quince "yell" and things have settled down for a protracted stay and obscured the picturesque landscape we sport on our crockery.

Yes, taking a dish in time saves nine; the cleansing process is less difficult and one can put more grease—I mean grace—into that menial but absolutely necessary domestic act. Some of those "fortnightlies" you abandoned proved rather splenetic art subjects, but with ashes and the garden trowel utilized as a pot scraper, one can finally triumph over dirt if not the devil.

I slumber with a warmed-over soapstone at my feet, the hot water bag and fur rug "ferninst," and dream of you. Presume you are unjawing yourself.

I am counting the hours now against your return, when you will fill the home with your couthie hilding and felicitous laughter, "clear as a clarion, soft as a bell." For truly, darling wife, are you good for human nature's daily food.

WADE.



AN UNEQUAL TRIANGLE

By Van Tassel Sutphen

CHARACTERS

THE WOMAN.

THE MAN.

THE OTHER MAN.

PLACE: A city residence.

TIME: The present—early on a January evening.

SCENE—The upstairs living room in Stephen Lloyd's house. At back there are two doors, the one on the left opening upon the hall, that on the right communicating with the more private apartments. A large square table stands in the middle of the room; it holds a lighted lamp, books, a double row of current magazines, a crystal bowl filled with cut flowers, two or three photographs in handsome frames, a humidior for cigars, and various smaller articles. Backing up against the table is a big upholstered sofa that directly faces the fireplace on the left. In the latter a wood fire is burning. Upon the mantelpiece, which is backed by a mirror, stand silver candlesticks, an "Empire" clock and a pair of Tanagra figurines. At the right is a grand piano, also a secretary-bookcase, its fittings including a desk telephone. On the left is a small table holding a phonograph of the cylinder record pattern. The usual rugs and easy chairs, a reproduction of Piranesi's "Golden House of Nero," a large photograph of Bellini's "Madonna of the Two Trees" and two or three smaller pictures complete the furnishing of the room. The curtains at the windows are closely drawn.

As the curtain rises the door leading into the hall is just closing. The WOMAN, taking from the table a silver cigarette case, goes swiftly to the hall door and opens it. She is in full evening dress.

Stephen! (She stands expectant for an instant.) You have forgotten your cigarette case. You want it, do you not? (She appears to give the case to the man standing in the doorway.) By the way, you might say to Tleson that I will not have the brougham, after all; I am not going to the concert. (She hesitates momentarily.) May the cards run smoothly—if there is anything in the old proverb you should surely find your luck

in them. Good night—Stephen. (She nods smilingly and closes the door. Then she walks over to the hearth, and stands there, gazing into the fire. She glances at the clock.)

Half past eight! It is later than I thought. (She goes to the table, picks up a magazine at random, and almost immediately lays it down.) Even then it means two interminable hours before I can find a decent pretext for going to

bed. I suppose that by this time I ought to know how to put in an evening alone; I have had plenty of practice. Besides, what more can a woman want than her music and her books—friends faithful and unchangeable? (*She sits at the piano and plays a few notes, then rises.*) It is no use; my fingers will not think for me tonight.

(*The WOMAN walks to the table, and, after carefully turning up the lamp, selects a book and sits down resolutely to its perusal. But finally her attention wanders, and the book slides unheeded to the floor.*)

Silence and woman! Monsieur Maeterlinck believes that he knows them both. (*She rises suddenly.*) But I—I am a woman! And around me lies the silence! (*She walks restlessly up and down the room.*) A quarter of nine! Almost two hours yet before I can begin—can begin to forget. (*A pause.*) Can I be sure that oblivion will come even then? What if it should prove to be a *nuit blanche*? A white night—well, the French are quite right; why not give a pretty name to an ugly thing? It makes it easier to look back upon, perhaps easier to face. And in the last resort I have my drops—the good genie of sleep enclosed in a bottle. The chemists, if they only knew it, dispense their blessings far too cheaply. What if the cost were proportionate to one's need!

(*The WOMAN notices the book lying on the floor. She picks it up and restores it to its place on the table.*)

There, that is better. For everything must be in order in this my living room; we are particular—I and my ghosts. Now real people, people of flesh and blood, would not mind; they might even prefer a certain intimacy of carelessness. There was Stephen, for instance—Stephen, who used to drop his cigar ashes over the rugs and pile great billowy heaps of newspapers about his chair. But neither of us minded; why should we? Those evenings passed so quickly that one had no time for trifles—happy trifles. Yes, it was different—then.

(*She resumes her restless pacing up and down the room, then glances at the clock again.*)

Nine o'clock! When one is killing time, why should it die so slowly? And even when an hour is dead its avenging spirit eternally returns to vex its slayer. (*She is silent for a moment; then a new mood seizes her.*) I wonder if Bruce is at his club? I know that he had no engagement to dine out. (*She goes to the desk and picks up the telephone book.*) The Portland is 290 Plaza, I think—yes, Plaza 290. (*She puts out her hand to take the receiver from its hook, and hesitates.*) Well, why shouldn't I? Stephen has no right to treat me as though I were a disobedient child. He leaves me every night for his bridge; therefore my life is my own, to do with as I choose. If it pleases me to summon Bruce Chatfield to my side, who is there to forbid me? (*She still hesitates.*) Only this is Stephen's house, and it is closed to Mr. Chatfield. Why? What other reason than that he is my friend, my one friend? I may meet him when and where I choose in the larger world, but not here. A ridiculous distinction for Stephen Lloyd to make, and for Stephen Lloyd's wife to observe. (*She rises and walks away.*) And yet I have, and do observe it. I reject the premise, but I accept the conclusion. A fool? No, I am a woman. And, apparently, that admission precludes further argument.

(*She goes over to the table and absent-mindedly raises the lid of the cigar box.*)

I wonder if Stephen can be smoking too much? The box was half full this morning, and now there are only two cigars left.

(*The hall door is suddenly flung open, but the WOMAN does not look up.*)

Who, did you say—Mr. Chatfield? (*She wheels quickly.*) Ah, it is you, Bruce! You are quite right; I did not expect to see you—not here. (*She goes toward the hall door.*) I want to speak to the man; would you mind letting me pass?

(*She draws her skirts aside in passing, as though avoiding the close presence of the visitor.*)

What is it, Tileen? Oh, a message from Mr. Lloyd! But how extraordinary! He sends word that he has placed a new record in the phonograph, and

wishes me to try it over! Are you quite sure that you have it correctly? Very good; I understand. *(The door begins to close slowly.)* One moment, Tleson. *(The door remains stationary.)* I am very sorry, but your service in this house is at an end. You will remember that Mr. Lloyd's instructions were absolute—Mr. Chatfield was not to be received as a visitor here. Please be ready to go within the hour. You may return here for your money. No, there is no answer to the message. That is all, I think.

(The door closes softly, and she turns to her guest.)

Perhaps I ought to apologize, Mr. Chatfield, for forcing you to be an auditor of this little domestic drama. But you are really responsible for its being put on, you know. Poor Tleson! I hope you'll take him on your conscience; it was hardly fair to have tempted him so highly.

(The WOMAN stands at the table, as though keeping it between herself and the visitor.)

Oh, never mind; we needn't discuss it any longer. You have doubtless observed that I don't ask you to have a seat. Quixotic of me perhaps, but I cannot forget that I am Stephen Lloyd's wife. *(With suppressed bitterness.)* That is for him to do. *(She picks up her fan and toys with it nervously.)* An intolerable condition! Well, perhaps it is.

(She passes in front of the table, and stands confronting the visitor.)

You have guessed at my humiliation, but you do not know its depths. Yes, even you who are a contributing cause—ah, you had guessed that? You were my friend, and a very dear one. But there was nothing more—you know that as well as I do. . . . You prefer not to answer? Just as you please.

There came a time when Stephen chose to take exception to our friendship. I explained, but the explanation did not satisfy. Stephen's attitude admitted of no compromise, and I was too proud to offer one. Then came the break.

(After a moment's silence.) Perhaps, in the beginning, it was more my fault than his. I was very young and very ignorant, and loyalty was a passion with

me. I believed that I could be equally faithful to love and to friendship at one and the same time. To a man that seemed impossible; it may seem so to you. *(She makes a warning gesture.)* Let me go on, please. I said there was a break. Since the middle of December, Stephen has not addressed a single word to me. If it becomes necessary to communicate with me, he does so through the medium of a servant—just as he did a moment ago by Tleson. Humiliating? I suppose it might be called that—only I do not seem to care any longer.

So we stand in an *impasse*. Stephen has declared that he will never abandon his position until I am ready to admit that I was in the wrong. But every silent hour that goes by is a new insult, a freshly inflicted wound. I told you a moment ago that I did not care. But—ah, that is the shame of it—I do!

(The WOMAN sinks into a chair and covers her face with her hands. Then suddenly she springs up and draws away.)

You must not say such words to me; I forbid it. *(With a change of mood.)* Now I have hurt you, but perhaps that was inevitable. Forgive me; I am not myself tonight; I think and feel strange things. There is a confusion of colors before my eyes, and I seem to be listening to unfamiliar sounds—the voice of falling waters, the clanging of metals and the crying of little children. I look and I listen, and always I am afraid.

(She passes her hand before her eyes, and takes a backward step or two. Then she goes on with stammering energy.)

My friend! My friend! I beg of you! Oh, what are you saying? No, no! You must not—must not! Do not touch me!

(She retreats a little space, then draws herself up proudly.)

I will forget what you have said; it is better so, and some day you will thank me. . . . Ah, you do not believe that? Not because it is incredible, but because you do not wish to believe it. There have been other women before me in your life; there will be others after me. . . . You protest—you call the Holy Ones to witness; do not fatigue yourself,

my friend. I remember that you are a man—like the others.

(The WOMAN seats herself on a low stool at the fireside. Then she speaks with an air of determination.)

Will you let me speak my full mind? . . . You are very good, and I thank you. *(She remains silent for a moment.)* Listen, then. You have been a friend, a good friend—for that I shall always be grateful. You wished to understand me, and in a sense you did—understood me as others neither cared nor tried to do.

And now you ask me—for what? A reward? Ah, my friend, I cannot think so meanly of you as that. Yet you must honestly care, or you would not have spoken at all. It was not necessary. I am still mistress of my husband's house, and bear his name.

But you insist that the situation is intolerable, and you offer me a remedy, the old time formula of relief from present ills, through the simple process of turning one's back upon them. My little ship of happiness has gone upon the rocks, and you bid me take refuge in the ark of your protection. It would be ungracious of me to doubt your sincerity now, or your good faith for the future. And yet I have only your bare word upon which to risk my all. If I had the excuse, or rather the urge, of passion to drive me on, I could not reason so coolly—and I would not. But I have ever been honest with you, and I must be so now.

The neglected and unloved wife, the estranged and indifferent husband, the generous-hearted and impetuous friend—it is the old, old triangle of fate. But, in this case at least, an unequal one. For even if I took you at your word, even if I could bring myself to sacrifice my good name to my resentment, it would only be a part of me that would seek the refuge of your arms. And that the worst part. The real woman would remain here, a bodiless ghost, perpetually haunting the scenes of her lost happiness. This is the truth; if I did not voice it now, the time would surely come when you would discover it for yourself.

(She rises and stands by the sofa, as though looking down upon one who sits there.)

All this is my own, my own incredibly selfish interest—yes, I know how it must sound to you. But, at least, you will award me the credit of having refused to exchange my pinchbeck against your gold. Were I as false to friendship as to love, I should not be telling you these things. Did I merely desire security for your future constancy, I should even now be spinning my invisible threads, building my unseen walls. Bonds unbreakable, barriers impregnable. For in the battle of the sexes it is only the woman who loves who is ever worsted. I should hold you to the end—that is, to my end.

And so, in naked justice to you, it cannot be. If I did not care so much—*(She is interrupted.)* Shallow, cold, a monster of egotism! Yes, I may be all that. But I did believe that you were entitled to the truth, that you had earned it of me. Everything else apart, I can't take what you offer, for I cannot repay you in kind. Have I made myself quite clear?

(A silence ensues. The WOMAN listens with attention, but shakes her head.)

No, I shall not change my mind. That time will never come; do not count upon it, my friend.

(A pause. She goes to the piano and plays a few bars, then stops.)

Like the rest of us the piano is out of tune. Even if there be only one false note, it makes itself heard through everything. Curious, isn't it? But none the less intolerable.

(The WOMAN rises and walks over to the small table on which the phonograph is standing.)

Conversation by machinery—what a godsend when one is feeling a little dull! Why shouldn't they invent portable instruments that could be worn concealed about the person? Think of being loaded up by a professional maker of words before going to a dinner party. What brilliance! What coruscations of wit and fancy! And silence, the common enemy, completely routed! We may put him to flight as it is. Marcel,

Justine La Haye, Pitzau—what will you have?

(*She turns smilingly, holding out the box of records. Then she looks closely at the phonograph.*)

Why, there is a record already in place. (*With a flash of memory.*) It must be the one that Stephen left word for me to try over—an unwonted attention on his part. Will you share in the wind-fall? (*She starts the mechanism.*)

The PHONOGRAPH—This isn't breaking my word, Teresa—

(*She turns quickly and stops the machine.*)

Why, it is a record that Stephen himself has made! His own voice! His first spoken word to me for over a month! (*In a mocking mood.*) And yet, really, it isn't. The excellent machine enables him to save his face. Now would you have believed that Stephen could be so subtle?

(*She readjusts the cylinder record so that it is in position to be started anew.*)

Yet it appeals to one's curiosity, doesn't it? A note in the third person or a message through Tilesen wouldn't receive a tithe of the attention that I am now prepared to bestow. Even if it's only some directions about the packing of his traveling bag, or a request to choose him a new lot of ties. Aren't you interested too, Bruce? You'll have to be, for you are going to listen with me. (*Again she starts the mechanism.*)

The PHONOGRAPH—This isn't breaking my word, Teresa; I am addressing my remarks exclusively to a stolid little cylinder of black gutta-percha, or whatever the stuff may be. Yet I take advantage of the quibble to abandon an untenable position. Honestly, then, I can't stand it any longer. I have been a fool, a brute—anything that you are pleased to call me.

Now I am coming home tonight at precisely ten o'clock. As I go up to my rooms I shall pass your door. If it stands open I shall understand that you are willing to give me another chance. If the door is closed—that, too, I shall understand.

(*The WOMAN gives a quick glance at the clock.*)

It is ten o'clock now! (*Listening.*) Wasn't that the street door? (*Again she listens, and the distant sound of footsteps is heard.*) It is Stephen! (*She rushes to the hall door and flings it open.*) He will be coming up in a moment. (*She turns to the visitor.*) There is but one thing to do—both for my sake and your own. Go and meet him. The truth is the only way. Go—go!

(*The door on the right is seen to open, and the WOMAN wheels sharply.*)

Not that door! There is no exit through my rooms. Ah!

(*She draws herself up to her full height, looking her unmeasured scorn.*)

So it was not a mistake! Shall we call it presence of mind? What more simple than to conceal yourself in my bedroom until he has passed upstairs and is safely out of the way? Admirably planned! And indeed you are quite right—I could not betray your confidence.

(*She walks away a few steps, and then returns.*)

But there is one weak point. You remember that a peculiar significance attaches itself to that other door—whether it be open or shut. If the former, Stephen will naturally assume that he is bidden to enter, and he will do so. That means that you are trapped in the inner rooms—but such a contingency is unthinkable. Should the door remain closed he will pass on upstairs—and, as he said, he will understand. In either event my position—

(*There is an interruption. The WOMAN listens with growing emotion.*)

I see what you mean. (*She speaks slowly and with difficulty.*) Stephen is quick-tempered—yes, and he may be armed. I had not thought of that. (*She reflects for a moment.*) Then it is neither of you nor of myself that I must think, but of him—of what it might mean, if he forgot— (*She listens.*) He is coming!

(*The sound of approaching footsteps is heard. The WOMAN runs to the hall door and closes it, standing with her back against it. The footsteps draw near—they halt for an instant—and then recede. There is silence. The WOMAN opens the hall door, stands a little aside and points to*

it. *An interval of a moment or two, and then she closes the door very softly. She walks to the sofa and sits there, staring into the heart of the fire. There comes a knock at the hall door, and her hand goes to her heart.*

Come in.

(The door opens. Finally the WOMAN forces herself to look around.)

What is it, Tleson? Oh, yes—you were to come for your money. I had forgotten. I will give you a cheque.

(She goes to the writing table and picks up her chequebook. She looks at it in some uncertainty.)

I am sorry, Tleson, but my balance is smaller than I thought. You will have to get it from Mr. Lloyd. . . . What do you say? . . . You will find him in his room. . . . Yes, of course; I heard him go up a few minutes ago. . . . I—I don't understand. Not there! *(She sweeps across the room in intense alertness.)* But somebody went upstairs. . . . You! You!

(She steadies herself against the table, and listens.)

You say that you went up the front stairs to lay out Mr. Lloyd's things for the night? . . . Yes, I understand that. And you are certain that he has not returned from the club? . . . Impossible! It is ten minutes after ten now. *(She points to the clock.)* He was to be here precisely on the hour. . . . More than half an hour fast! That clock! *(She takes out her watch, and glances at it.)* I beg your pardon, Tleson; you are quite right, and it is only half past nine. Only—only that!

(The WOMAN sways a little and sinks into a chair. Then she recovers herself.)

Thank you; I don't care for any water. It is only a momentary giddiness. *(She waits a moment, and then continues in a steady voice.)* You let Mr. Chatfield out? . . . Quite right. *(She reflects.)* You have been with us for several years, Tleson; do I understand that you would like to remain? . . . Yes, I appreciate all that. I think we may agree to call it an error of judgment, one that need never again be mentioned to anyone. That is quite clear? . . . Very good.

(She rises and walks across the room. Then she turns.)

Mr. Lloyd will be home in a few minutes now. You had better be waiting for him in the lower hall. That is all—thank you.

(The door closes. The WOMAN looks at herself in the mirror over the mantel-piece.)

I am glad that I wore the sapphires to-night; Stephen likes them better than any of my other jewels. *(She glances again at her watch.)* Twenty-five minutes of ten—an infinity of waiting. *(She smiles.)* But it is an infinity that may be circumscribed.

(She goes to the telephone.)

Will you give me 2000 Madison? . . . Yes; is this the Cosmos? . . . Is Mr. Lloyd in the club? . . . Please tell him that Mrs. Lloyd hopes that he will come home at once—that he need not wait until ten o'clock. . . . Yes, quite right, many thanks.

(She rings off and goes to the hall door.)

Perhaps ten minutes saved. But even that is something. And now—

(She flings the door wide open and stands expectant by it as the curtain falls.)



"MY sister sings 'Il Trovatore' in five sharps."
"Mine sang it in six flats, but they made her move out of every one."



MONEY isn't worth loving, for it will only break your heart when you have to say good-bye to it.

A MONK AND A FATHER

By Adachi Kinnosuke

THE monk was in his room alone in an ancient temple in the city of Kyoto called Daifukuji. He was juggling with his own loneliness. Outside the night was black, although still young. A boy priest ushered in a guest.

"Honorable teacher of law," said the visitor, "I am the father of O-Tsune, my only daughter—" He raised his sleeve to his lips and "shot breaths," but no more words.

"Deign to proceed," urged the monk gently.

"My humble wife, her mother, and I reared the child in an ah-the-butterfly-ah-the-flower manner, evil in the eyes of the Buddha and of the law. Perhaps her *karma* was wicked also. It is written, is it not, that the flower face is a curse from the Home of Fire. And she grew up white and slender as an uplifting bud of lotus and fair as a dream. Our hearts were soft when we faced her. We forget that even our Lord, the All-Merciful, sends white winter to the naked boughs of cherries. Repentances? But what avail them, august man of law?"

"Is it, then, that they are too late? Repentance is the gate to the happiness garden to come."

"O-Tsune my daughter died last night. Where in the shadow world she is wandering now, the humble one does not know. I know only that her ghost is freighted heavily."

"May the mercies of our Lord Buddha lighten her burden!" said the monk, his voice thrilling with a strange earthly emotion.

"She had wandered far through this floating world of sin," said the father.

"And the All-Seeing Nyorai knows

well that its streets are not laid out in straight lines," added the monk.

"I have brought with me a token she had left with us when she started on her far journey." So saying, the visitor fumbled in the breast folds of his kimono and brought out a small package done in a white sheet of paper. He unwrapped it and laid it between him and the monk on the matted floor. It was a small dagger blade. The visitor continued:

"As you see, it is stained. With it she cut her life string. The child was strangely silent—"

"The cause of her self-murder had not your honorable daughter told you before she left you?"

"Never a fragment of a word—that is, from her own lips. When my wife dressed our daughter's hair for the journey beyond, there was found—this." The visitor took out a thin roll of letter sheet and carefully smoothed it out before the eyes of the monk. "Pray deign to read."

"So it was the night darkness of love in which she had lost her way?"

"That seems to be the story the note tells. Teacher of law, do you know the handwriting?"

The monk picked up the love letter from the mat. He conned it with a languid care, then put it down again and looked straight into the eyes of his visitor.

"Do you recognize it, teacher of law?" the visitor repeated.

"Yes," said the monk, letting his eyes wander back to the letter. "I know those brush strokes—well."

"And for the love of the writer of the loveletter, Tsune my daughter forgot the Buddha; for the sight of him, she acted

like one possessed by the fox; for him she strayed from the way, and it was his cruel hand that tore the *koto* strings of her heart. Am I not right, teacher of law? And for him she cut the string of her life."

"Yes, yes—even as your honorable words."

"Why not, then, teacher of law—why not the point of the dagger? It is stained a little, as you see; but it would answer, would it not? Why not the same point of the same dagger for him for whom she died? Why should he not scatter steps in the shadow world, even as my daughter is doing now, lost and wandering? Does not the voice of justice speak in my voice, teacher of law?"

"Even so," said the monk with a grave bow.

"And you know the handwriting, teacher of law?"

"And the master of the writing brush—yes, I know him well."

"*Sono hazuda*—since the writing, it is your own!" said the visitor, the suppressed violence of his emotion throwing him forward. "So you do recognize your own brush strokes, author of the letter? That is well. Your soul is as the color of the sable cloak of law under which you hide it. However, your liver is neither shaking nor is it scattered. So you know your handwriting, holy teacher of law?"

"My handwriting?"

"*Ho-so!* After all, there seems to be room for a query. Are these the traces of your honorable writing brushes? Pray deign to take the trouble of tracing a line or two—the ink stone is on the stand, I see. Will you deign—that your own eyes may bear witness to the grace of strokes which once did delight the eyes of my poor daughter? *Namu-amidabutsu!* Ah, her faith in the holy guide of the Buddha Way was great! And because of him, her ghost is even now stepping on the first round of the nine cycles of the Home of Fire! Do I speak true, teacher of law?"

"True as the moon of Shinnyo," said the monk. "And for her soul lost, Honorable Presence seeks the company of another soul, also lost?"

"And the dagger point is stained and ready, as you see," said the visitor evenly.

"See, there is the altar of our Lord Buddha," made answer the monk, "and the blood is not pleasing in the eyes of the Enemy of Death. I have, however, made ready for your reception this night. Here is a package of incense. He who breathes its smoke in all its strength more than three times sheds the garment of the flesh and frees the ghost. There is the censer. I beg, therefore, that the Honorable Presence keep his cushion here—not too close to the censer. But when the smoke will have thinned through the room, pray deign to approach me. If then the *koto* strings of my heart sing not, pray go in peace. Your daughter will have gained a companion, and her journey through the shadow world will not be lonely. Do my words answer the beckonings of your honorable wish?"

"But does the incense cut the life string, man of law, or does it merely hold it still for a time? Does it hold a promise of life after a few hours?"

"What matters it?" the monk answered. "The poison of the soiled name is more powerful even than this incense of death. I am dead, even now. Do you not see, only a trifling formality remains to be performed."

"True," said the visitor; "and your words are fair and satisfy the hunger of justice."

"One thing more," said the monk. "Will you deign to swear there, before the altar of our Lord Buddha, and swear hanging upon your honorable after life, that you will be satisfied with my death; that you shall never seek another's life for the sins against your daughter; that with the passing of my ghost the face of justice is washed clean—whatever there may come to pass in the days to follow? Will you deign?"

"I do not understand, teacher of law," said the visitor. "Yet, why should I not? Yes, I will."

"Pray proceed to the altar then."

And before the altar the visitor uttered his solemn, soul binding oath.

Then the monk took the place before

the censer; the smoke rose. A little later the visitor approached the monk in profound prostration and felt his heart. It was still. "*Namuamidabutsu!*" he murmured piously, then rose, pale and tense, and stole away from the room.

II

ABOUT half a year later, as the twelfth moon was dying in the tumult of a closing year, there came to the priest called Ansai, who succeeded the monk of the Daifukuji temple after he had passed into the shadow world with the curling smoke from the censer, a stranger. He was a petitioner for grace, a neophyte. He prayed that he might receive the "rite of the razor" in token of his renunciation of the world and the life thereof.

Therefore the priest Ansai led the man into the Room of the Altar. Every neophyte who prays to be shaved must first answer many questions before the altar of grace and tell the reasons why he wishes to devote himself completely to the heaping of merits in the sight of the Lord Buddha and carry his shaven head in protest against the night that is in the soul of man.

After many prostrations and the chanting of *suttas*, the priest Ansai faced the neophyte.

"For what acts of life, through what cloudbreak in the illusions of existence, by what graces of the Lord Buddha and His mercies were you led to this lotus dais of grace? Answer before the altar of the Holy One!" said the priest, calling for the preliminary confession.

The petitioner answered, saying:

"My humble daughter, august man of law, died for the love of a man who had sinned against her. That was many moons ago. We found a love note written her by him. Before the light of the Moon of Truth, I declared to myself that I knew the handwriting of that note. I therefore went straight to the author of it and asked him to accompany my hapless child in her wanderings through the shadow world. And he did, teacher of law!"

Emotion robbed him of speech for a time. He continued:

"At the year end housecleaning in honor of the birth of the new year, we came upon a photograph and a letter, both hid in the back of the metal mirror of Tsune, my daughter—hid as in a shrine. Both the letter and the picture—and the picture was of a man, noble and pleasing to the eye—both of them were signed.

"I read the name, teacher of law. I have read the name many times since. The brush strokes are the same as those of the love note with which I had persuaded him whom I believed to be guilty to pass into the shadow world. Yes, the handwriting was the same. The name—I have read it many times since. It and the picture of the handsome young man, both of them stand over my pillow by night to do battle against sleep and the grace of the Lord Buddha which brings peace to the eye."

"The name?" Ansai asked.

"August teacher of law, you were the bosom friend of the holy man of meditation of this temple who joined the veranda of the lotus one night half a year back?"

"Even so; my heart friend of the same oath and of the same doctrine gate. Next to the Lord Buddha, he was the closest to my humble heart."

"He was a teacher of law of the sable clothes."

"Even so, and none purer—true as the Moon of Truth."

"*Namuamidabutsu!*" said the neophyte, pale as death. "Purer and truer than the man-seen dreams of holiness ever dreamed!"

"And what of my friend of the law?"

"Did you know, teacher of law, that he had earth ties?"

"Earth ties—with that holy man of law?"

"Earth ties, before he had received the razor, I mean."

"To men of meditation the illusions of the earthly life are as the dust of yesterday. They do not speak of them when they gather in the company of the Buddha and them who sit on the lotus."

"Well, teacher of law, he had."

"The earth ties of my friend, are they what have guided you to the altar of grace this night?"

"No, august teacher of law—but the name I saw on the picture and on the letter—"

"Was it the name on the picture and the letter that has brought you here this night?"

"Neither the name—" The neophyte shook his head.

"Then—"

"All three in one, together they have brought me here praying for the touch of the holy razor."

"Ah, the wretched!" The priest flushed, forgetful for a second of his sable cloak. "It was you, then, who shall have to answer for the blood of my elder master in the law!"

"This altar, it is the altar of mercy, is it not?"

"Even so, how can you hope to heap merits mountain high enough for the atonement of a crime so deep?"

"If the mortification of the flesh and the bitter anguish of the soul be a measure of repentance, the Lord Merciful will not be stone-hearted to me a sinner," said the neophyte, his eyes flooding even while they were in flames. "For the rest of this life and every hour of the nine more incarnate existences, the humble one is ready to do penance. May not the Merciful One take pity and hear my prayers?"

"You are before the altar of mercy," answered the priest, regaining his grave composure. "But were you not very sure that the brush strokes of the love

letter were those of the monk of Daifukuji? How came it—"

"I had sworn that they were. You see, august man of law, the humble one had known the monk of Daifukuji since his childhood. I had known his brush strokes as far back as my memory travels. I was so sure. And the monk of Daifukuji—when I placed the love note before his eyes and asked him if he knew the handwriting, he himself said that he recognized it—*well*. Pray be patient and let my words hang on the honorable ears. I—I never questioned. It never occurred to me to question—until—until we came upon the picture and another love letter enshrined there back of my daughter's mirror—another note by the same brush."

"And the photograph, was it not the face shadow of my friend, the monk of Daifukuji?"

"No, teacher of law, no!"

"And it bore the name of the original, did you say? And also the love note which kept it company?"

"Even as your honorable words, teacher of law," answered he who begged for the touch of the blessed razor. "Yes, they were signed—ah, small wonder that the monk of Daifukuji knew the brush strokes of the love letter well! For—for the name on the picture and the letter was the name of his own son!"

"His own son!" Ansai repeated softly to himself. "His own son! So the wheel of law is reversed—the father has suffered for the *karma* of the son! *Namu-amidabutsu—namuamidabutsu!*"



WHEN a woman realizes that she looks charming in black she begins to hope that she will soon be out of it.



COLD bottles sometimes provoke heated arguments.

THE GAP IN THE WALL

By Jane Belfield

RED and white the roses bloomed in the garden. As the novice stood peering through a gap in the stone wall that separated the garden from the monastery, he marveled at the bewildering luxuriance of the roses that climbed over the wall, hiding a gap where a stone was missing.

Only this morning, as he had weeded the walks, the young monk had noticed one rebellious bud peeping saucily through the wall. Now roses were forbidden in the monastery; therefore the novice had never beheld a rose. But as he plucked the fragrant blossom he had observed the break in the ledge hidden in a tangle of vines.

It was his duty to report the missing stone; but even as he inspected the breach, he caught a glimpse of the flowering masses of red and white in the garden beyond; and as his captivated artist's eye fastened upon a tall white bush, a girl—he supposed it was one of the saints, for, born in a convent and reared in a monastery, he was acquainted with women only as pictured madonnas or saints—detached herself from the rosebush and glided toward him.

So white was she, so golden; the sun shone through her face. The young novice knelt by the breach and clasped his fingers over the broken ledge.

"Madonna!" he breathed. The girl turned at the sound of the voice, and her pale eyes encountered two dark and glowing orbs fastened upon her through the aperture.

"Did you call me?" she asked, and her soft voice matched her pale eyes; then, as the other remained silent: "Are you a monk?"

"I shall be, madonna," he breathed, as one at a shrine.

"But, if you are a monk, will you not permit me to look at the monastery garden? I have always wanted so to look, but they will not allow me."

The novice rose and moved aside, and the girl set her chin upon the rough stone. "Look," he said.

"But it is not a garden," she murmured with a little disappointed sigh. "I have always wanted to look—but now I am sorry that I have seen, since it is not a garden."

"No, it is not a garden," he returned simply; "and yet a moment since I thought it was a garden—because on the other side of the monastery there are low beds of purple violets."

"Violets!" the girl repeated. "Ah, I shall not be able to see them, if you will not permit me to enter; and I should so love to see them. Are there no women in your garden?"

"Are you a woman?" he questioned, still wondering.

"Did you think that I was one of the saints?"

"I do not know what you are, madonna. I have seen no woman save the nuns, and even that was when I was a babe. But I know that your face is like the St. Cecilia in the crypt below the altar."

"Could you show her to me—that Cecilia?"

"It is forbidden."

"Why?"

"I do not know, but—it is forbidden."

"Then I will show you my garden. Come over."

"That also is forbidden."

"Why?"

"I do not know."

"But no one will know if you come," she pleaded. "See, another stone is loose. I can easily make the gap larger. You are so thin, and the rose vines cover the break. Come over, please—I am lonely."

She widened the gap with fingers so delicate, his lean brown hands were impelled to complete the task. His body followed, and with his hood about his ascetic features, the young novice stood a stranger among the roses.

"You are from Provence?" The girl glanced wistfully into his olive face.

"Yes; my mother was in retreat in Our Lady of Sorrows."

"And you have never seen the world?"

"No—I am the gardener of the monastery. I do not wish to look. Next year I take the vows."

"And who then will tend the purple violets?"

"I do not know."

"Why?"

"I do not know. To ask is forbidden."

"But shall you be shut away then, like the other monks?"

"I do not know."

The girl laid one blue-veined hand upon its sister flower. "It is too heavy for me. I only know the trees and the sky and the flowers—but I have wondered. Have you not wondered—not even when you bend over the violets that grow on the other side of the monastery? Have you not wondered then what is without?"

"It is forbidden."

"It is all too heavy for me," she repeated gravely. "Will you walk among my flowers?"

The novice followed as the girl flitted between the bushes. By and by they came to the square tower in the center of the garden.

"This is my house." She paused before the door of stone masonry.

"I have often looked at your tower from my cell in the monastery." He stood by her side, a little apart, his hands folded within the sleeves of his cassock.

"And have you not wondered then?"

"The tower was a part of the scenery. I accepted it."

"Will you come in?"

A bell tolled from the neighboring turret.

"It is the hour for vespers—I must return," he answered.

"But you will come again tomorrow?"

The novice hesitated.

"I am lonely," she urged in the golden voice. "You will come?"

"Yes, I will come. I shall not be missed."

Then the girl led him back through the flowering paths, by the bush whence she had sprung, to the break in the wall.

"I am glad you found the gap," she said. "The rose was my messenger."

The other glanced at her in uncomprehending silence.

"Are you wondering now?" she smiled. "What is your name?"

"Ignace."

"Shall you come tomorrow, Ignace?"

His face reddened. "I do not know."

"But see, I will give you white roses for the altar—here!" She broke the slender stems and held them toward him. "There are as many as you wish. Will you come tomorrow? I am lonely—Ignace."

"I will come; but I cannot take the roses. They are forbidden."

As he slipped through the opening, the lady of the garden drew together the rose vine, so that its thick foliage hid the break in the ledge. Every evening after vespers she waited for the novice by the gap in the wall.

A fortnight later the girl led her companion up the winding stair and out upon a broad, square platform on the summit of her tower. A little telescope was mounted in the center of the open space. The girl turned, one hand upon the great lens.

"My father was an astronomer, Ignace; but now he is dead, and my mother is dead, and the old duenna who guards me falls asleep every eve at twilight. Where do the monks think you are now, Ignace?"

"The brothers are all old men, asleep in their narrow cells. The gates are barred."

"And we two are alone with the

stars! Have you ever seen the stars, Ignace?"

"Not from a tower. How black it is below!"

"But look above. Ah!" She sank upon her knees in one corner of the stone platform. "It is all too heavy for me—the beauty of the skies!"

The girl lifted her eyes, and the glance of the novice followed to the vast map of the heavens outlined in the velvety blackness above their heads. Through the palpable darkness the high stars seemed to be falling upon them in golden clusters. Toward the distant horizon the celestial canopy darkened over the hills.

"Do you know the constellations, Ignace? The Pleiades and the seven stars of the Great Dipper? That is Orion"—one slender finger pointed to the east. "This is the Butterfly. Look through the telescope at the edge of the crescent moon. Venus is the evening star tonight, but Mars will not be so near us for another hundred years. Where shall we be then, Ignace, you and I? Ah, it is a pity that one cannot live forever and see everything!"

"I have seen enough." His darkly troubled glance sought hers—pale, uplifted, searching through the night. "A fortnight ago," he went on, as one groping in a fog, "I did not know anything. What is this I feel now?" His white face, agitated with young ignorance, came between the kneeling girl and the distant stars. "What is this I feel? I do not know—and therefore it must be forbidden."

But the girl, far away in thought, did not heed his words. "I seem to take flight from my body when I come up here," she whispered. "Some day I shall forget to return." She lifted her face—and again, between her eyes and the black immensity of space, two nearer orbs met hers with compelling beseechingness.

"Ignace!" she faltered. "You are not looking at the stars!"

"I am going back to the monastery." His face bent lower; his eyes lent fire to hers. "I am going to pray before the shrine of that other St. Cecilia, because—I do not understand."

"Oh, no!" She put up her hands then to clasp his sleeve. "If you go you will never come back to me! I know you will never come back. Take me with you! I cannot bear to be alone."

"It is forbidden."

"Who forbids, Ignace?"

"The law."

"What law? I know no law. My father knew no law which forbids. Stay with me. There is no such law written on the stars. What does the law matter, since the stars will shine unmoved a hundred years from now when the earth has swallowed us both? Stay with me, Ignace."

"I cannot stay. It is forbidden. He stood erect, his arms outstretched in the form of a cross. "And I cannot go!" The impotent arms dropped to his side.

"Ignace"—the pleading voice sank lower—"we are alone with the stars—thou and I. They do not forbid. The old monks are asleep and do not care for us. Even my old Alice is asleep. There are only we two to wake and care, Ignace. Ah, since the rose has led you to me, is it not in nature that we two should be happy?"

"I do not know."

"It is in nature"—her hands clung to the sleeve of his cassock—"that you should stay with me forever. The monks do not need you. They do not care. Only I need you—only I care. Stay with me, Ignace!"

And beneath the spell of the pleading voice, at touch of the insistent hands, the man within awoke and caught her in his arms. A moment the girl lay strangled in his embrace ere she fell—a little crushed heap upon the stones.

"I must return!" he cried. "It is the law. I do not understand—I only know it is forbidden. I cannot break the law."

"Ignace"—her panting whisper held him—"did you not know, Ignace, that I am only one of the garden flowers?" Her breath was lost in one long, quivering sigh. "You have but slain a rose. It is all too heavy for me—Ignace!"

But he had turned and fled from the whisper, leaving her there, a little heap of crushed fragrance, solitary beneath the immensity of uncaring stars.

THE LAND OF BORES

By Walt Mason

IN the country of the bores people never shut the doors, and they leave the windows open, so you're always catching cold; and they lean against your breast while relating moldy jest that had long and flowing whiskers when by Father Adam told. In the country of the bores people carry sample ores, and they talk of mines prolific till you buy ten thousand shares; and they sell you orange groves and revolving fireless stoves, while they loll upon your divan with their feet upon your chairs. In the country of the bores every other fellow roars of the sins of public servants and the need of better things; in a nation full of vice he alone is pure and nice, he alone has got a halo and a flossy pair of wings. In the country of the bores men who wish to do their chores are disturbed by agitators who declaim of iron heels, urging toiling men to rise with chain lightning in their eyes and do something to the tyrant and his car with bloody wheels. In the country of the bores evermore the talksmith pours floods of language on the people, who were better left alone. But that land is far away, and we should rejoice today that we're living in a country where no bores were ever known.



NEW YORK BY NIGHT

By Frederick Eddy

IT seems a dim nocturnal garden, where
Pale phosphorescent flowers wax and wane;
Each street is like some flower-bordered lane
Of tropic gardens, weirdly, strangely fair.
Like orchids shines the pallid purple glare
Of arc lights, and like crocuses when rain
Stars them with pearls, the yellow gas lamps stain
The darkness with their color here and there.

Like sick red roses, lights of warning shine,
And like vague, strange, exotic flowers of sin
The green lamps of the precinct palely gleam:
Like ghosts who seek celestial anodyne,
The people pass, the cab lights flit within
Like glowworms through the gardens of a dream.

THE TRIAL OF A HEART

By J. Raines Wilson

PLACE: *The Court of My Soul.*

TIME: *Now.*

HEART (*prisoner at the bar*)
CONSCIENCE (*prosecuting attorney*)
REASON (*presiding judge*)
WILL (*sheriff*)

MY Heart is a red rebel. Other faculties of my being contend that it is insane. Anyway, it is at war with the universe and all therein—except one other heart, for the possession of which it ever longs and cries.

It will not listen to Reason. There is no logic in love—only deathless yearning. My Heart would wreck the universe and demonize the angels, just to sate its desire in the possession of its beloved.

To restrain it my Will had to arrest it. Then it was arraigned in the Court of My Soul for solemn trial.

Conscience, prosecuting attorney by God's own appointment, read the indictment: "Love for a woman."

HEART—Guilty.

CONSCIENCE—You dare not!

HEART—I dare all! Yes, all—God, angels, demons, men, wife, children, friends, time, eternity, Heaven, Hell!

CONSCIENCE—But think of duty.

HEART—There's no such word in my language.

CONSCIENCE—But you are *obligated* to love another woman.

HEART—Yes; and I do not dislike her now. She is a jewel, fair and faithful. She has borne much for me, and from me. I am not unmindful of her worth. And yet—I love another.

CONSCIENCE—And what about your

children—their confidence in you, their expectations of you, their future destiny largely your making?

HEART—Bless my children! Yes, I know them, and love them, too. They have bright promise. It would hurt them forever for me to be false. They would remember me with shame and sorrow. Unless they themselves should come into a similar experience they could never understand. I would die for them today! Yet still, *I love her!*

CONSCIENCE—Think of *her* children—her husband!

HEART—I have thought. Her children have a right to her love and care—her husband to her fidelity. I like them. I would not rob them. They have never injured me. But my love for her is not because she is married and a mother. 'Tis because she is the *one* woman to me. No earthly relationship can affect me. These relationships may have force in the realm where you, Conscience, and the judge, Reason, reign, but when I love, *I love*—once and forever! Nothing else ever enters my realm.

CONSCIENCE—What about your religion—would you bring it into disrepute?

HEART—Religion is true. Its principles are true. I have no purpose to hurt it. But I tell you that *volition* cuts no figure in my realm! There are cold-

blooded wax men and women who will never understand. They never felt the primal fires that burn on my altar. They are "languorous lilies of soulless sin." Many of them will judge harshly because of ignorance—others because of innocence—and some because of viciousness. But my love is independent of religion or the judgments of men. I would continue to love if all men approved, and shall—though all men condemn.

CONSCIENCE—But, remember, you must account to God.

HEART—Yes. His laws are just. He is righteous. I am willing to meet Him. He made me. He knows *how* I love, and *why*. Only He can ever understand me, and He will acquit me at the last trial.

REASON—So you are not sorry that you love her?

HEART—No. Can the sun be sorry because it shines, or a flower because it is fragrant?

REASON—And you refuse to stop loving her?

HEART—Yes, because I have no choice in the matter. As easily could gravity cease to pull at matter or rivers stop on their way to the sea.

REASON (*to* CONSCIENCE)—It is evident from this trial that the defendant, Heart, is not responsible. He is in our charge. We have a duty to perform. For the sake of society and the families and friends related to this case, we must send this Heart into exile while these earthly relationships last. Sheriff, take charge of your prisoner.

A few hours after court adjourned the following message was received by wireless:

"St. Helena, Everywhere, in Time. To the 'One Woman' forever, in all Worlds:

"Eternal Law has banished me in Time. The edict of the judge was based on the Character of God. He has no power to annul it in our present relationships. So I sit in exile on life's St. Helena, and hear the surge of impassable seas break on the strand of my spirit. No walls of stone or steel imprison me, but barriers built of flesh and blood and spirit. I might, in the desperation and loneliness of my longing for you, batter down a prison of dead matter. The walls that separate us reach from earth to Heaven. I cannot scale them, nor go under nor around. Woe is me for Time! I can see you, so near and yet so far! Across the sea that parts us no boat can carry me. I can only stand on the shore of my loneliness and launch little love ships, built of longing and heart pain, hoping perchance they may anchor some day in the harbor of your heart. I shall abide my exile as best I may, until 'there shall be no more sea.' And when that time comes I shall find you somewhere in Eternity, and taking you by the hand, will lead you through all throngs in all worlds unto the throne of Him who made you for me. There I shall make my plea for you with face unabashed and voice tense with eternal yearning, and He will give you unto me for endless years!"



WHEN a fellow has his first case of puppy love he thinks himself a sad dog.



MEN sometimes become crooked in order to keep their accounts straight.

LA LETTRE

Par Edmond Jaloux

LE soir venait lentement dans le salon de Mme. Desdevizes, un soir de printemps fait de tendre nonchalance, de mélancolique mollesse, de grave abandon. Sur une commode Louis XVI, à cuivres dorés, une pendule de la Restauration, du plus charmant rococo, avait depuis longtemps renoncé à marquer l'heure. Près d'une fenêtre, un magnolia encore sans feuilles ouvrait ses belles coupes roses et blanches, à l'odeur huileuse et citronnée. Et dans ce cadre où tout n'était que charme et que renouveau, Mme. Desdevizes évoquait son premier amour.

—A dix-sept ans, me raconta Mathilde Desdevizes, je sortis du couvent. J'étais tout à fait une enfant, et cependant, je ne sais quel secret pressentiment, quelle particulière vocation m'inclinaient à ne penser déjà qu'aux choses de l'amour. Mes parents voulaient me marier vite; on me mena dans le monde comme on m'eût menée au marché. Je dansai, on me fit la cour. Je m'occupai des hommes déjà mûrs qui ne s'intéressaient pas à moi et je négligeai les petits jeunes gens qui me suivaient partout. Je finis pourtant par me lier avec un fort joli garçon qui avait une trentaine d'années. Pensif et un peu mélancolique, il montrait des moustaches guerrières, un teint bronzé et des yeux rêveurs. . . . Enfin, un ensemble charmant. Il s'appelait Georges Lagrenée. Sa mère était morte toute jeune et, son père s'étant remarié, il vivait en étranger, entre une belle-mère hostile et des demi-frères odieux. Intelligent, mais indécis, doux, mais capricieux, il était, quand je le connus, fort incertain de sa destinée. Il voulait quitter la France sans trouver la force de s'y décider. Comme il fut le seul à ne pas me faire la

cour, je m'attachai à lui. Il me parla avec une gravité qui me toucha, demanda conseil à l'enfant que j'étais. C'est alors que j'eus une idée de jeune fille: je voulus que l'homme qui m'intéressait fût un héros.

"Je lui expliquai donc qu'il devait devenir un héros, tout de suite, pour prouver à son entourage qu'il avait une grande âme. Il ne demandait pas mieux que d'avoir une belle âme, et comme on se battait encore au Tonkin, il décida sur-le-champ de s'engager dans l'infanterie coloniale. Il était si content que je m'intéresse à lui à ce point!

"—Je le ferais plus volontiers encore, me dit-il, si vous me promettiez. . . .

"—Quoi donc?

"Je dus l'intimider, car il rougit et n'acheva pas sa phrase.

"D'un mois, je ne le revis pas. Puis, il vint m'annoncer tout joyeux qu'il s'était engagé, qu'il allait partir. Si vous aviez vu de quel regard il me contemplait en disant cela! Moi, je fus soudainement désolée. On ne saurait penser à tout: je ne m'étais pas rendu compte qu'en conviant Georges Lagrenée à être un héros, je me privais de mon seul ami.

"C'était la fin de l'hiver: nous dansions ensemble trois fois par semaine. Georges semblait toujours sur le point de me faire un aveu . . . mais lequel? Pendant une soirée, il m'entraîna dans un salon écarté.

"—Je pars dans une semaine, Mathilde. Je n'ai pas voulu vous le dire plus tôt. J'ai donné à tous mes camarades un petit souvenir. Me permettez-vous de vous offrir, à vous aussi, quelque chose: ce porte-cartes?

"Il le sortit de sa poche.

"—Quand vous l'ouvrirez . . . commençait-il en rougissant.

"Ce fut le moment que choisit ma mère pour venir me chercher: elle voyait de mauvais œil mon intimité avec Lagrenée, qui n'était pas un beau parti. A mon grand étonnement, Georges partit huit jours après, sans venir me dire adieu. Et je sombrai dans une mélancolie profonde. Cependant, Mme. Lagrenée nous donnait de loin en loin des nouvelles de son beau-fils; il s'était battu, on en avait fait un caporal, puis un sergent! Georges devenait un héros!

"Au bout de quatre ans, M. Desdevizes se présenta; vous le connaissez: il n'était ni plus beau, ni plus amusant qu'aujourd'hui. Il ne fit aucune attention à moi et alla demander ma main à mon père. Je refusai. Il était riche; j'eus à subir des scènes violentes. Je songeai avec détresse à mon vieil ami, à mon héros. Ne reviendrait-il pas m'arracher à ce M. Desdevizes?

"Un soir de détresse, je ressortis le fameux porte-cartes, je l'examinai sur toutes les coutures. Comme j'ouvrais un compartiment intérieur, j'en sortis une lettre. Jugez de ma naïveté! Je n'avais pas songé qu'il pût y avoir un billet dans une des nombreuses poches! Georges Lagrenée avait dû interrompre sa phrase au moment où il allait m'enseigner cette cachette, mais il pensait certainement que, même sans avis, je saurais bien fouiller partout!

"Cette lettre, vous en devinez le contenu. Il m'avouait tout ce qu'il n'avait pas osé me dire, qu'il m'aimait, qu'il

voulait m'épouser, qu'il partait pour me mériter. Il me suppliait de lui envoyer un mot avant son départ, de lui apprendre si je l'aimais ou non.

"Vous vous représentez ma douleur. J'avais laissé partir Georges désespéré! Il ne reviendrait plus! Je lui écrivis. Je lui dis mille folies, que je l'adorais, qu'il vienne me délivrer, qu'on voulait me marier à un butor, etc. Seulement, je n'avais pas son adresse. Mme. Lagrenée était en voyage. J'étais folle d'impatience. Je pensais que Georges accourrait sitôt qu'il aurait reçu mon message. . . .

"Ce qui vint un soir, ce fut mon père, qui me dit, le visage contracté:

"—Mathilde, j'ai une mauvaise nouvelle à t'apprendre. . . . Un de tes amis. . . .

"Déjà, je sautais sur mes pieds.

"—Georges?

"—Oui, j'ai rencontré Lagrenée; il est revenu de voyage. . . . Son fils a été tué sur la frontière du Tonkin, par des pirates. Il paraît qu'il est mort en héros!

"Je roulai à terre, en proie à une crise de nerfs affreuse. Pendant huit jours, je fus entre la vie et la mort. Mais on revient de tout. . . . Et je revins à la vie!

"Voilà à quelles misérables combinaisons peuvent tenir la vie d'un homme, le bonheur d'une femme. . . ."

Mme. Desdevizes se tut. Sa voix tremblait. L'odeur des magnolias montait plus lourdement dans la pièce. Une fleur se détacha de sa branche et avec un bruit sec toucha le parquet.



A SILVIE

Par Jean de Segrais

DE votre belle bouche une seule parole
M'est ce qu'au voyageur est l'herbe fraîche et molle,
Et l'aise de vous voir est à mon cœur blessé
Ce qu'une eau claire et vive est au cerf relancé.

FRENCH FRIED DRAMA

By George Jean Nathan

I HAVE been seized again with a new form of insanity. In the mid-winter period of every year I invariably become violent in one direction or another. Four years ago at this time I paid a tailor's bill; three years ago at this time I read the criticisms of William Winter; two years ago at this time I actually praised a play by Owen Davis; a year ago this month I still liked to imagine that there must be one man left somewhere in the world who believed dramatic critics were honest; and at present I find myself obsessed with the idea that certain French playwrights whose processes of theme thought I once as a credulous child was prone to view with some seriousness are in all reality lunatics. I must be crazy, for is not this attributing of mental aberration and deficiencies to others one of the first and most unmistakable of symptoms? And notwithstanding this, as I steady me and permit myself to become introspective, I cannot believe that I am yet bereft of all balance.

Am I not still able, forsooth, to refrain from going into ecstatic eulogiums over the intermittently presented thau-maturgic philosophical and scientific sciolisms that are viewed as profound contributions to the drama by a large portion of my otherwise eagle-eyed brother lodge members? Am I not still able to perceive that Mary Garden is an artist only as N. W. Ayer & Son are artists? Am I not still able to descry that there are some among that ordained group known as "young American dramatists" who are not and probably never will be more than half-Bakered products because they will not realize that the "play" is *not* the thing, that

observation of life *is*; that a study of the models of Scribe, Molière and Ibsen is only the first step and not the landing; that three epigrams do not make another "Lady Windermere's Fan," and that a scene in a bedroom at midnight or thereabouts is not the only dramatic thing on earth? And am I not still able to figure out among other things that one of the tallest barricades in the pathway of sincere American drama is the demand on the part of the local haberdashery for the omnipresent investment in plays of that insuppressibly idiotic and childish quality known in the argot of the theater as "sympathy"?

Before the guards come with the strait jacket, however, let me expound my present form of hallucination. It has come to me, let me explain, while witnessing Pierre Wolff's play, "THE MARIONETTES," produced by Charles Frohman with Madame Nazimova in the role of the convent bred girl Fernande. The thesis exploited is the venerable, celebrated and recurrent boulevard psychophysical deduction that the attraction of the female to the male is to be stimulated, increased and accomplished in terms of lingerie, laces and décolletés. Every few years some impressible son of Gaul rushes into the public square with this favorite theme. Bernstein with "The Thief" was the most recent. The habit is contagious. At the beginning of the present season we even beheld a cheap native imitation christened "The Real Thing." The Gallic popularity of some of the plays presenting the corollary would seem to indicate that the *enfants de la patrie* accept such psychophysics of garb as are ladled out to them in the theater

with no small degree of gravity. It is with this in mind that I now undertake the clinical and missionary task of saving their souls and enlightening their playwrighting tutors as to scientific inaccuracy of the dramatic Turkey Trots which their pens dance so frequently on the boards of Paris. And it is because of the periodical importation of such exhibits to the native stage, because of the ungrounded immorality they insinuate into the heads of the local freeholders, and because of the latter's demonstrated inclination toward the deglutition of such theme stuffs as "vital," "strong," "daring," "sensational" and what not, that I am influenced to resolve myself this month into a physician and in that capacity dissect the latest drama patient.

Lest you have forgotten the plot symptoms of the species of play in point, let me in a word recall to you "The Thief." Marie Voysin's husband admires well gowned women. Marie is fearful of losing her husband's love. To inflame the latter's desire for her, Marie steals so that she may deck herself with the ribbons and laces of Eve's cryptic liturgy. Marie, according to the playwright and the development of his foot-light essay, succeeds in her purpose. "THE MARIONETTES," basically, parallels the foregoing effort. Fernande's husband does not love her because she is plain. Whereupon presumably wise little Fernande, like presumably wise little Marie, makes for ribbons and laces, dons décolleté and actually, according to the playwright and his play, wins back her husband on the spot. This, too, despite the fact that her husband for several years has been having his fill of ribbons, laces and décolletés in the shape of one Lucienne de Jussy. Any theatrical justification for material of this dubious, unpalatable brand must rest in its fundamental element of truth. The perfumes of adaptation, instead of rendering more fragrant and harmless the unperceived Gallic quackery of intrinsic dramatic motive power, usually succeed only in raising the sex nostrum a couple of convincing olfactory octaves in the native nose. It is by virtue of

the lack of truth in such theses even in their original form, by virtue of the fact that Bernstein and his brothers are bold and bald psychophysic fakers of the theater, by virtue of the fact that they do not know what they are talking about, if for no other reasons, that the supposedly antiseptic versions of their "sensational" plays and all plays like unto them should be stripped of their widely advertised pretensions and revealed in the nude. In direct point, the attitude of the metropolitan critic clan toward the latest of these products, "THE MARIONETTES," would seem to indicate that the day of the French adaptation on these shores is rapidly nearing its sunset. We are driving the Wolff from the door!

Marquis Roger de Monclars, husband of Marquise Fernande, will you kindly step this way into my private office? I wish to show you how little your creator understood your condition. And, through you and the Marquise, I wish to indicate to the coterie of dramatists who are interested in such as you the error of their diagnoses. Now then, my dear Marquis, the science of the relation between stimuli and the sensations which such stimuli evoke is, as you may believe, a bit complex. Mind you, I am speaking to you as a Frenchman—I have not forgotten your nationality, your race, despite your temporary abode in the Lyceum Theater—and you, like Voysin, are a normal Frenchman, neither better nor worse than the average of your fellows. If we may judge from the picture your parent has drawn of you, you are a man of legitimate senses, regular acts and of analogical habits and mind. You, like Voysin and all the others in plays of the character with which we are dealing, are not members of the Charcot, Krafft-Ebing set by reason of the subsistent fact that your dramatic fashioners have stipulated you are not. Hence are you fair tests for our laboratory. A casual understanding of the ritual of psychophysics is sufficient to assure us that sensations may not be regenerated without limit by the same form of stimuli, whether the sensation be appetite for food and the stim-

ulant a Clover Club cocktail tanged with vodka, whether the sensation be reading suspense and the stimulant the latest Sherlock Holmes tale, or whether the sensation be fleshly appetency and the stimulant the most bewilderingly spectacular production of franklinsims in the whole length and breadth of the archduchy. An appreciation of this firmly authenticated psycho-pathologic truth makes the tale that this Wolff seeks to build through your character, *mon cher* Marquis, take on the appearance of the sort of paper-bound booklet fiction that the postcard vendor seeks cautiously and covertly to sell one for a dollar and a quarter while the policeman is not looking. You, Marquis, and your friend Voysin undoubtedly admired and were duly petrified at the mysteries of the notion counter in the years before you figured in the particular plays herein concerned, but in each of these plays there are two dozen different facts that indicate indisputably that you had got over such things.

Had Bernstein been more of a student, an investigator or even a fugitive reader of the history of the species of case with which he sought to cope, and less of an empirical manufacturer of climacteric theatrical scenes, from the basic bosh of which the audience was temporarily diverted by loud yellings, queer athletic feats and much mastication of the furniture, he would have learned that, so far as accuracy went, his heroine might have accomplished her purpose *not* by affecting fine feathers rather than by affecting them. The law of opposites, marked change and contrasts is one of the elementary lessons in the science of which we have been treating. The same thing might have been operative in the instance of M. Wolff and his heroine Fernande. A stimulant need not of necessity be of a progressive, provocative strength. When a Northerner wishes an increased sensation of the electricity of life during the winter season, he does not stimulate that sensation by going further into the cold to Newfoundland, but rather does he turn directly in his tracks and make for Aiken, Palm Beach or Bermuda. So, in a more relevant psy-

chophysic direction, the man of the world of fashionable women not infrequently feels his footsteps directed toward the calicoed country girl. "THE MARIONETTES," with all credit to a gratifying performance by Nazimova, remains bumptious ignorance presented in archaic dramatic mold.

Turn we now to the introductory effort of a new native playwright. His name—Charles Kenyon; his play—"KINDLING." And turn we now comparatively to one of the most promising and worthwhile presentations of the current season.

In the first place, Mr. Kenyon has distinguished himself at the jump from among the group of American writers for the stage by indicating himself to be one of the few who believes that some sort of a seaworthy idea is a pretty good thing to have lying around in a play. In the second place, he has distinguished himself by working out honestly a theme that smacks of the stiletto truth of Brieux without having followed the recently instituted and highly popular custom of pilfering his idea from the latter and palming it off as original. And in the third place, he has distinguished himself even more through his demonstrated ability to project a hearty and heady narrative across the footlights with a form of "construction" that has been charged with countless sins, but with a form of construction, praise be to Allah, that has not been modeled arbitrarily, after the prevailing fashion in such cases among the younger school, upon the scaffolding of "A Doll's House," "The Lady of Lyons," or one of the other readily detected and in all probability directly irrelevant structural patterns. In the Kenyon play we discover a woman of the tenements whose husband, a decent German, drives maternal ambitions from her mind with the warning that children born in the chill and filth and poverty of such surroundings come into the world sickly, quivering little things beaten at the very first gunshot of the tortuous battle of life. "They grow up, if they last that long," says Schultz, "only to curse their parents." His wife hears, but in her eyes

there glows the star fire of yearning, persistent motherhood. Her dream *must* come true. And yet in her ears ring constantly her husband's words: "I'd kill one if it came, Maggie, 'cause that'd be the only square thing to do by it!" How? It has taken weeks of secret scraping together by bleeding nails even to buy a wretched fourth-hand cradle at some alleyway fire sale. *How?*

There comes to her a whisper from the streets. Steal! In the passing days Schultz happens now and again upon curious little gold pins, a small silver cup, baby ribbons, funny things such as these hidden in various places around the room. Where did they come from? And why are they there? Just trinkets, says Maggie uneasily, and picked up for no purpose at all. Maggie implores her husband to take her away, somewhere beyond the tenements. There's been a strike among the stevedores. He smiles. Where is the money to come from? The woman, pale, her teeth showing white in a nervous laugh, tells him she already has the money. How much? A hundred dollars. Where did she get it? Oh, a loan from a rich settlement worker. The man is puzzled. His suspicions become aroused. The house of the family for which the woman has been sewing has been robbed. Detectives are on the trail of the culprit. The trail brings up at Maggie's door. The man looks at the woman. Her gaze falters. "You thief!" he cries. She cowers before him. His hands, groping about the table, fasten themselves upon the tangle of baby ribbon that has been thrown there by him in anger a moment before. Their eyes meet in understanding. "Come to me, Maggie," he says to her through the wet of his tears. "Come to me, dear; I'm proud of you!" Into this dramatic motif are stranded the threads of metropolitan tenement evils and of the hypocrisy and futility of certain kinds of settlement work. Miss Margaret Illington is the Maggie of the play. By her performance of this role, she establishes her right to a fair share of the histrionic comparisons inferred in her favor by the critics when Madame Simone appeared in the same theater during the previous month.

A. E. W. Mason, whose play, "THE WITNESS FOR THE DEFENSE," has been shown at the Empire, is a novelist. Probably this is one reason why his characters consume fifty words to express what might be said very well in five. In everyday life a man will casually remark: "It feels like rain." That same good soul, put into a novel, will say: "The atmospheric conditions in this vicinity impress me unmistakably as to the certainty—that is, unless unforeseen meteorological changes ensue—as to the certainty, I repeat, of an early and considerable falling of moisture from the clouds." That is, he will express himself thus unless he happens to be in a novel by Henry James or William De Morgan, in which event he will consume twice the number of words. Of Mr. Mason's dramatic effort, comment need not be extended. Despite its repetitious harangues and the shiny seat of its theme, which savors in a broad-colored way of "Mrs. Dane's Defense," murder being substituted for sex croquet, the presentation is not without its several engaging moments. These, however, owe their birth not to the author, but rather to the presence in the exhibit of Miss Ethel Barrymore.

Admittedly an artist of the theater, it yet remains to be recorded against this actress that in the present exposition she seems to have given the impression of a retrocession from the status she achieved in "Mid-Channel." While not denying that I, too, was sensitive to this seeming diminution of talent, I cannot but come to the conclusion that in no small measure was the reception of the effect due to the atrociously bad lighting of the stage. In two of her most important scenes, the features of the actress were scarcely discernible this side of the proscenium arch and, as a result, her most poignant weapons were taken from her. When we stop to reflect that that prosperous Burbank of the native drama, Mr. Belasco, has relied on lighting to a considerable extent in his rapid development of Miss Frances Starr from the crude product into one of the most finished and admirable performers in the American theater; when we consider that by the vastly ingenious but amaz-

ingly simple device of putting up the lights two points every time she comes upon the stage he subtly causes her audience to feel that it is she, *her personality*, that lifts the scene; when we observe that the baby spotlight that is centered by this astute student upon her features is a wee bit brighter than those directed upon the countenances of the other actors, thus slyly imparting the impression to her audience that her features are naturally more expressive, clearer and more greatly capable of projecting emotions than the features of her supporting company; when at the end of this irritatingly long sentence we reflect upon matters such as these, is it to be doubted that lighting may have a very positive bearing upon what an audience is wont to regard as histrionic art? Had Mr. Belasco been at the switchboard the night I witnessed Miss Barrymore's performance, I do not doubt for a minute that I, in company with every one of my brother recording angels, would have been juggled into proclaiming the fact that her performance had actually surpassed all of her performances in the foregoing years.

To make discourse at proper length upon the large merits of the band of IRISH PLAYERS from the Abbey Theater in Dublin, and to hazard the giving of a just and sufficiently complete estimate of the gorgeous poetry of Synge which they have transposed from the library to the stage, is a tilt too formidable for the small area of space left me for the purpose by the crowded tourney of the present month. Of "The Playboy of the Western World," their most important contribution, it may here be repeated in brief that it is a work splendidly rich in poetic humor and satire, a work that, despite its clownish over-advertisement, is worthy of the serious attention of such desirables as realize that honest literature and stomach laughter may go hand in hand. Synge's "Riders to the Sea," with its mother's wailing waltz motif of happiness come out of desolation and of peace bred by the last of great disasters; "Spreading the News," Lady Gregory's gleaming little comedy showing up Mrs. Grundy;

and Shaw's familiar "Blanco Posnet" are among the presentations to be recommended on the run for your positive gratification.

Here we have William H. Crane in Martha Morton's play, "THE SENATOR KEEPS HOUSE," a piece modeled as closely as possible after the gambols in which this actor delighted the natives in the old days—the curious old days when people still went to bed at night, when Bronson Howard's plays still amazed the public, and when a slap in the face combined with a behest to go to the devil was still regarded as a wonderful dramatic climax. It may be too bad that times are changed; it may be too bad that we no longer roar with father's mirth over the cellar jocularly and badinage of "Twelfth Night"; it may be too bad that we no longer indulge in salty slobbers over the troubles of the pitiful Lady Gautier; it may be too bad that we no longer permit ourselves to be thrilled at the species of drama exhibited in "The Charity Ball," "The Wife" and the other plays that in their day were regarded as marking the native dramatic Belasco-De Millenium; it may be too bad that we are theatrically, at least, a smarter, a better educated, a more discriminating, a shrewder people—I am not sure. But one thing is certain. The psychophysics of drama change as do the psychophysics of any and everything else. To provoke a sensation, to obtain an effect, to induce a sensitiveness, the stimulus cannot be of unvarying character. I have experimented upon myself at irregular intervals over a period of many years to determine how long and to what degree repetitions or parallels in drama might retain their power of stimulating sensations—in other words, how many times a certain dramatic moment might reproduce its original effect on one. And I have persuaded several co-workers to submit themselves to similar laboratory work. The result of this collaborative experiment has indicated that the life or duration of the intrinsic energy of this or that dramatic ingredient is limited to three repetitions. Scientifically speaking, therefore, it is because the present

Morton exhibit exceeds the restrictions that it generates no spark of electricity in its audience.

The most thankless of tasks—and I make no exception in the case of sincere dramatic criticism—is the writing of a so-called historical play. Were I a dramatist, I should prefer to take upon my shoulders rather than such a labor the even more appalling toil of writing a role that would please Mrs. Leslie Carter or fashioning a piece that would achieve the approbation of Paul Armstrong. In the first place, no matter how able a section of transcriptory drama one might prepare, there must always be some souls possessed of a passion for investigation and statistics who, upon seeing one's humble contribution, must stand up on their chairs and cry out that the play is probably all right in its way but that Queen Elizabeth, according to the records, certainly did not look like that, and, besides, had a mustache. In the second place, there is the highwayman charge of having taken "liberties." Let Napoleon take two pinches of snuff instead of one, and no matter how otherwise praiseworthy your attempt may be, a hundred yeomen will arise to protest that Napoleon never did any such thing, and that, as a consequence, you do not know what you are talking about. "It is very much more difficult to talk about a thing than to do it," said that indefatigable O. Henry epigrammatist of another day. "In the sphere of actual life that is, of course, obvious. Anybody can make history; only a great man can write it." But a merely great man cannot write a historical play that will satisfy two persons out of five. A historical play will breed louder words and a more sublime roughhouse in a hitherto peaceful and law-abiding theatrical community than anything in the world, save possibly the casual remark that one really understands what Percy Mackaye is trying to get at in his plays.

Following "DISRAELI," we have been introduced to a second play based on a historical subject. "THE FIRST LADY IN THE LAND" 'tis named, and Charles Nirdlinger is its sponsor. Although wholly devoid of the drama that is begot

from situations, the exhibit presents to us in graceful, plastic, tingling dialogue the triangular love affair of James Madison; Aaron Burr and Dolly Todd in the days when Philadelphia was the capital of the United States; when the word "American" still possessed some meaning; and when the eye was not being constantly insulted with such barbaric sartorial affronts as derbies, batwing ties, high buttoned boots and laundered cuffs. An expository act that is poorly constructed and a willingness to permit the star performer to appropriate the center of the stage on all occasions mar what is otherwise a highly commendable attempt to do something worth while for the native drama. Miss Elsie Ferguson, who is accorded the role of Dolly, has ample charm of feature and figure, and so is undoubtedly qualified in the eyes of the theatergoing public for what is known as "stardom." That I cannot find it in my estimate to concur with this popular opinion, that I find here the need of a deeper study of comedy and dramatic values together with variation of projecting methods, probably has nothing to do with the case.

Picture the Capitoline Eros and Psyche dressed respectively in a frock coat and a Peter Thompson; conjure up the Venus di Milo in a green bathrobe; imagine the lovers of Giorgione clad in Yale sweaters. Then lay violent hold on yourself and recite the famous "Midnight Ride," leaving out all references to Paul Revere and his horse; fancy in your mind's eye Salome doing her dance behind a thick screen; let your ears conceive the sound of Wagner played by an orchestra containing no wind instruments. And when you have practised and have succeeded in doing all this, you will possess an excellent idea of Louis N. Parker's dramatization of the legend of the Lady Godiva, in stage form given to the world as "THE LADY OF COVENTRY." To three circumstances, therefore, may be attributed the complete failure of Mr. Parker's play: first, the fact that Paul Potter did not write it; second, that F. Ziegfeld, Jr., did not produce it; and third, that Viola Allen instead of one of the Marcel group played the central role.

ROUNDING UP THE NOVELS

By H. L. Mencken

LET us now, ladies and gentlemen, besot ourselves with prose fiction—the last debauch of that sort, I promise you faithfully, for several months at least.

Not that I myself dislike novels, or hold the vice of reading them to be worse than any other vice. Far from it, indeed. As a lifelong student of immorality in all its branches, I know very well (or I ought to know, if I don't) that between one vice and another there is no difference of degree, but only a difference of kind. One is just as bad as another—and just as good; just as deplorable—and just as satisfying. They bear the relation, one to the other, not of czar and peasant, whale and protozoön, Ossa and wart, but of free and equal citizens in an ideal republic. And that equality, I am convinced, has its roots in the fact that all of them, at bottom, are alike harmless. The essence of a vice, in brief, is not in its actual character, not in any inherent evil quality, but in its mere excessiveness, its hint of hoggishness.

I take, for example, the vice of drink—a target of moralists for unnumbered years—the cause, we are told, of eighty-eight per cent of all maladies of the veins and arteries, of ninety-one per cent of all lunacies and phobias, of seventy-eight per cent of all felonies, of sixty-four per cent of all divorces—the author of and excuse for the Salvation Army, acetanilid, the hot towel of the barber shops, the exhorting ex-drunkard, the Blue Laws, "Ten Nights in a Barroom," the Anti-Saloon League of America, local option, the blind pig, the free lunch, organized charity, *katsenjammer* and a host of other hideous and horrific things.

But of what elements does the vice of drink consist? Inspection shows that there are two: (a) the act of taking a drink, and (b) the multiple repetition of the act. Let us represent the first by x and the second by y . Now multiply the one by the other and we have $x \times y$, or xy —which thus becomes the symbol of and for the vice itself, the mathematical sign of drunkenness, the souse swastika. Well, which of the two elements is the essential one, the vicious one? Certainly not x . To take a drink, in itself, is not harmful. I myself do it now and then, and yet I am neither an apoplectic, a maniac, a felon or a divorcé. My personal experience, indeed, is that the ingestion of alcohol, in the modest quantities I affect, is not only not damaging but actually very beneficial. It produces in me a feeling of comfort, of amiability, of toleration, of mellowness. It makes me a more humane and sympathetic, and hence a happier, man. I am able, thus mildly etherized, to enjoy and applaud many things which would otherwise baffle and alarm me—for example, the tenor voice, Maryland cooking, cut flowers, the Chopin nocturnes and the young of the human species. And that effect is not merely idiosyncratical, but universal. It appears in all normal men. Alcohol in small doses dilutes and ameliorates our native vileness. Behind the spirit of Christmas are the spirits of Christmas. It is the suave gin rickey, the ingratiating whiskey sour, that gives ninety per cent of all civilized lovers the valor to make the last enslaving avowals—or, to be more accurate, that produces the state of egoistic inflation which serves in valor's stead. And later on it is the more fiery whiskey straight that steels the

bridegroom to face the baleful glitter of the parson's eye.

Thus it appears that drink, *per se*, is not a viper. On the contrary, it is a sweet singing canary, a faithful house dog, a purring cat upon a hearth rug. And thus it also appears that the member which makes *xy* lamentable is not *x* but *y*. But what is *y*? Merely a symbol for excess, the mathematical sign of superfluity—in brief, *n*. Merely a symbol—a scratch upon paper—and yet how nefarious, how demoniacal! Make *x* represent anything you please, however innocent, however lovely—and naughty *y* is still able to give a sinister quality to *xy*. Try it with shaving. One shave—a pleasant business, sanitary and caressing. But *y* shaves in succession—a debauch, a saturnalia, a delirium! Or platitudes. A platitude here and there, discreetly inserted, deftly screened—who shall say that it does not give discourse an air? But *y* platitudes, an orgy of platitudes—in short, a sermon by a bishop, a political platform, a newspaper editorial—and how the tortured intellect revolts! And so with novels. To read a novel or two now and then is to do only what civilization demands of us all. One must know what Arnold Bennett is writing of late, what Thackeray and Zola wrote, even what Dickens wrote. But to read novels, good and bad, incessantly; to wallow in them, to gulp down whole counters of them, with all their split infinitives, their “as thoughts,” their gold and scarlet covers, their astounding pictures by A. B. Wenzell, their canned reviews, their pallid lecheries, their brummagem epigrams—to do all that is to practise a vice as bad as winebibbing, even as bad as teetotaling. The devil is in it. Voluptuous, it leads to perdition.

And yet that is precisely what we have before us this month—a debauch, an orgy of novels, good and bad—so many that I fear to count them. They have been piling up for months—ever since the best seller factories began belching their autumnal smoke. If we are ever to get through them and have done with them, if we are ever to hold discriminating conversations about the other and better books waiting beyond them, we

must now gobble them with defiant abandon, as a small boy gobbles ginger snaps behind the pantry door, and with no thought of the immorality of the spree. And as the first act of that spree we can do no better than gulp down “THE AMAZING ADVENTURES OF LETITIA CARBERRY,” by Mary Roberts Rinehart (*Bobbs-Merrill*); “THE MAN IN THE BROWN DERBY,” by Wells Hastings (*Bobbs-Merrill*), and “HOW OLD WAS ANN?,” by Kate Trimble Sharber (*Bobbs-Merrill*), three volumes of excellent trade goods by three of the most skillful journeyman fictioneers in all our republic. The first named is in Mrs. Rinehart's very best manner. It sets forth a story full of those surprises and perplexities which lift the pulse and pop the eye, and it sets forth that story with never failing bounce and humor. Mrs. Rinehart is not afraid of a situation. She faces it squarely—and disposes of it with a twist of the wrist. Consider, for example, the opening scene of this tale. A certain Mr. Johnson, a spiritualist with three wives beyond the sunset, has just died in a hospital and his body has been removed to the mortuary, where a young and skittish nurse is left to guard it. Overcome by the gruesomeness of her job, the girl turns her back upon Mr. Johnson. A faint, creepy sound. She turns 'round. Mr. Johnson is hanging from the gas bracket, a roller towel around his neck! A hair raising situation, to be sure. But Mrs. Rinehart deftly keeps it in the comedy key—not in the key of heavy, hairy-fisted comedy, but in the key of light comedy. A clever woman! A best sellerist with redeeming virtues! And so, too, Mr. Hastings. It is a mere story of mystery that he has to tell, but he tells it with such ingenuity and humor that one readily forgives him. And so, too, Mrs. Sharber. Her concern is with young love, but she evades its tediousness and penetrates to its joy.

Sternier stuff. To wit, “THE INDIAN LILY,” by Hermann Sudermann (*Huebsch*), a collection of short stories of quite extraordinary excellence. Sudermann's last book, “The Song of Songs,” was disappointing. Maybe that was because the first chapter was done too well;

after such a dashing piece of writing the less brilliant chapters following seemed more commonplace than they really were. But whatever the true and the whole cause, the book left an impression, at the end, of something lacking, of a plan somehow marred in execution. Its weight was on the side of the theory that Sudermann had shot his bolt, that his obvious decline as a dramatist was merely a symptom of a larger going backward. But in these new stories of his that theory gets its quietus. Here we have short tales of the very first calibre—mordant and illuminating studies of men and women, each with the chill wind of disillusion blowing through it, each full of shrewd observation and biting reflection, each preaching, with more or less gay whistling in the dark, the doctrine that life is meaningless, that its tragedy has no moral, that its heroics are mere heroics, that the button molder is ever around the corner. Sudermann is fifty-four; his youth is gone. The shadow of that loss is upon half of these stories. In one a man of middle age, dallying lightly with love, as with a joy to be tasted tomorrow, sees it stolen from him by a young ruffian he has scarcely considered seriously as a human being. In another an old roué, suddenly getting his fill of adventure, turns sentimentally to romance—only to find that romance has gone out of his life forever. Two other stories are incisive studies of self-sacrifice. In one a woman sacrifices her all to a lover, in the other to a husband. Each loses youth—and each loses the man.

These last stories are among the best that Sudermann, or any other German of today, has ever given us. That called "The Purpose" is a little masterpiece, not only because of its content but also because of its technical perfection, its display of virtuosity. Here, in less than fifteen thousand words, Sudermann has told the whole story of a woman's life—told it in all its essentials, and yet without leaving any sense of bald brevity, of mere chronicling. Antonie Wiesner, a country innkeeper's daughter, falls in love with Robert Messerschmidt, a medical student, and they sin the scarlet sin.

To Robert, perhaps, the thing is a mere midsummer madness, but to Toni it is all life's meaning and glory. Robert is poor and his degree is still two years ahead; it is out of the question for him to marry her. Very well, Toni will find a father for her child; she is her lover's property, and that property must be protected. And she will wait willingly, careless of the years, for the distant day of triumph and redemption. All other ideas and ideals drop out of her mind; she becomes an automaton moved by the one impulse, the one yearning. She marries one Wiegand, a decayed innkeeper; he, poor fool, accepts the parentage of her child. Her father, rich and unsuspecting, buys them a likely inn; they begin to make money. And then begins the second chapter of Toni's sacrifice. She robs her husband systematically and steadily; she takes commissions on all his goods; she becomes the houri of his bar that trade may grow and pickings increase. Mark by mark, the money goes to Robert. It sees him through his college; it gives him his year or two in the hospitals; it buys him a practice; it feeds and clothes him, and his mother with him. The days pass endlessly—a young doctor's progress is slow. But finally the great day approaches. Soon Robert will be ready for his wife. But Wiegand—what of him? Toni thinks of half a dozen plans. The notion of poisoning him gradually formulates itself. Not a touch of horror stays her—she is, by this time, beyond all the common moralities—a monomaniac with no thought for anything save her great purpose. But an accident saves Wiegand. Toni, too elaborate in her plans, poisons herself by mischance, and comes near dying. Very well, if not poison, then some more subtle craft. She puts a barnmaid into Wiegand's path; she manages the whole affair; before long she sees her victim safely enmeshed. A divorce follows; the inn is sold; her father's death makes her suddenly rich—at last she is off to greet her lover!

That meeting! Certainly Sudermann must give it to us again, and in a play! It is a scene full of the surge and tension of drama. Toni waits in the little flat

that she has rented in the city—she and her child, the child of Robert. Robert is to come at noon; as the slow moments pass the burden of her happiness seems too great to bear. And then suddenly the ecstatic climax—the ring at the door. . . . “A gentleman entered. A strange gentleman. Wholly strange. Had she met him on the street she would not have known him. He had grown old—forty, fifty, a hundred years. Yet his real age could not be over twenty-eight! . . . He had grown fat. He carried a little paunch around with him, round and comfortable. And the honorable scars gleamed in round, red cheeks. His eyes seemed small and receding. . . . And when he said: ‘Here I am at last,’ it was no longer the old voice, clear and a little resonant, which had echoed and reechoed in her spiritual ear. He gurgled as though he had swallowed dumplings.” An oaf without and an oaf within! Toni is for splendors, triumphs, the life. Robert has “settled down”; his remote village, hard by the Russian border, is to his liking; he has made comfortable friends there; he is building up a practice; why not try it? He is, of course, a man of honor. He will marry Toni—willingly and with gratitude, even with genuine affection. Going further, he will pay back to her every cent that ever came from Wiegand’s till. He has kept a strict account. Here it is, in a little blue notebook—seven years of entries. As he reads them aloud the events of those seven years unroll themselves before Toni and every mark brings up its picture—stolen cash and trinkets, savings in railroad fares and food, commissions upon furniture and wines, profits of champagne debauches with the county counsellor, sharp trading in milk and eggs, “suspense and longing, an inextricable web of falsification and trickery, of terror and lying without end. The memory of no guilt is spared her.” Robert is an honest, an honorable man. He has kept a strict account, and he will repay mark for mark; the money is waiting in bank. What is more, he will make all necessary confessions. He has not, perhaps, kept to the strict letter of fidelity. There was a waitress in Berlin; there was a nurse

at the surgical clinic; there is even now a Lithuanian servant girl at his bachelor quarters. The last named, of course, will be sent away forthwith. Robert is a man of honor, a man sensitive to every requirement of the punctilio, a gentleman. He will order the announcement cards, consult a clergyman—and not forget to get rid of the Lithuanian and air the house. . . . Poor Toni stares at him as he departs. “Will he come back soon?” asks the child. “I scarcely think so,” she answers. . . . “That night she broke the purpose of her life, the purpose that had become interwoven with a thousand others, and when the morning came she wrote a letter of farewell to the beloved of her youth.”

A short story of rare and excellent quality. A short story—oh, miracle!—worth reading twice. It is not so much that its motive is new—that motive, indeed, has appeared in fiction many times, though usually with the man as the protagonist—as that its workmanship is superb. Sudermann knows how to write. His act divisions are exactly right; his *scènes à faire* are splendidly managed; he has got into the thing that rhythmic ebb and flow of emotion which makes for drama. And in most of the other stories in this book you will find much the same skill. No other, perhaps, is quite so good as “The Purpose,” but at least one of them, “The Song of Death,” is not far behind it. Here we have the tragedy of a woman brought up rigorously, puritanically, stupidly, who discovers, just as it is too late, that love may be a wild dance, an ecstasy. I can imagine no more grotesquely pathetic scene than that which shows this drab preacher’s wife watching by her husband’s deathbed—while through the door comes the sound of hot kisses from the next room. And then there is a strangely moving Christmas story, “Merry Folk”—pathos with the hard iron in it. And there are “Autumn” and “The Indian Lily,” elegies to lost youth—the first of them almost a fit complement to Joseph Conrad’s great pean to youth triumphant. Altogether, a notable collection of stories. No need to make excuses for Sudermann now. His hand was never

steadier; he was never more the master of his art.

Another German awaits—Gerhart Hauptmann, like Sudermann a wholesaler in literature, novelist, dramatist, poet. But before we come to him let us gulp down a few more lesser novels—for example, "A COUNTRY LAWYER," by Henry A. Shute (*Houghton-Mifflin*); "HER HUSBAND," by Julia Magruder (*Small-Maynard*); "IN THE SHADOW OF ISLAM," by Demetra Vaka (*Houghton-Mifflin*), and "THE DEN OF THE SIXTEENTH SECTION" (*Broadway Pub. Co.*). The first named is a pastoral by the author of "The Real Diary of a Real Boy," a book which slowly moves toward the rank and dignity of a juvenile classic. Here the beginning is melodrama, but the middle is gentle comedy and the end is young love. Judge Shute has a keen eye for character; his caricatures have a Dickensian plausibility; one always feels that he knows his people. Miss Magruder's story is a polite romance in the *Ladies' Home Journal* manner. Mrs. Vaka-Brown's is the chronicle of an American girl's love affair with a Turk—a love affair, by the way, which stops short of the ultimate absurdity of marriage. The author knows the scenes and the people she describes intimately, completely. A Greek herself, she has lived in Constantinople; she has visited Turkish women in their homes; she fathoms the complexities of Turkish politics and etiquette; her account of harem life, "Haremlik," is perhaps the best ever written in English. But her present story shows a constant ineptness in plan and execution. Its incidents proceed clumsily; there are long halts and returns and double trackings. And its heroine lacks the blood of life; with her "clear blue-gray eyes," her "firm lips" and her vast bank account, not to mention her cardiocentric theory of the universe, she is a bit too near the common heroines of the best sellers. The Greeks and Turks are more real. Perhaps Mrs. Vaka-Brown will try again and make a clearer success of it. She knows the Levant, inside and outside, and she knows how to write English; all she needs is a firmer grip upon her materials. What

"THE DEN OF THE SIXTEENTH SECTION" is about I don't know. The style of it is so startlingly original that it is impossible to keep one's mind upon the story. Says the heroine, on one page: "Oh, if the earth would only open and swallow me for the time being!" Again, in declining the hero's offer of holy matrimony: "I thank you from the depths of my heart for the honor, and beg a continuation of the friendship that to me has been a great source of beneficial pleasure, a spring from which has flowed a bountiful supply of refreshing food for my inexperienced mind to feast upon, making bright many lonely hours." Yet again: "My dear sir, if there is such a thing in this life as one human suffering for another, or the bonds of love and sympathy being so strong that the very life's blood is drawn for another, is a very feeble expression for what I feel for you in this most heartrending and lonely inexpressible depths of sorrow that man was ever called on to bear." Well, well, let that last sentence stand as my review of the book, as my offer of consolation for those who try to read it.

Now for Hauptmann. His story is "THE FOOL IN CHRIST" (*Huebsch*), an attempt to retell the story of Christ in a modern setting. The thing, of course, has been done before. Years ago, if I remember rightly, the ingenious W. T. Stead wrote a volume called "If Christ Came to Chicago," and made with it a distinguished *succès de* yellow journal. Imitators followed, the last of them but a few months ago, with a new version, perhaps the tenth, of "If Christ Came to Paris." In art it's an old, old story. Rembrandt paved the way with his Biblical etchings—Job a Zeeland mortgage shark, Moses an Amsterdam rabbi. The Germans, latterly, have gone even further. I remember a "Mother and Child," in some Munich shop window, with the babe grasping a nursing bottle and Mary in prim gingham. Let it be said for Hauptmann that he has steered clear of such heavy-handed burlesque. His Christ is a German peasant, out at elbows and more than a little daft, but from first to last he has dignity. The

chief merit of the book, indeed, lies in its conveyance of this idea. One understands from the start the impression that Emmanuel Quint, the carpenter's son, makes upon the weavers and tinkers of the countryside; one follows clearly the change from fear to respect, from respect to awe, from awe to frank worship. The village parson reads Emmanuel out of meeting; the village squire takes him up as a rogue and vagabond. But one by one the lesser folk yield to the magic of his personality. In the end the noise of his fame reaches far. A fashionable countess, eager for new thrills, offers him hospitality; a psychiatrist or two deigns to observe him; he is engaged in disputation by learned connoisseurs of the fantastic and the mystical; he finds his Mary of Magdala, his motley band of disciples. The Passion, of course, is impossible—the German *polizei* are too alert for that—though in the British West Indies, not twelve years ago, it was actually played out, with a young negro, crazed by Salvation Army theology, as the victim! But an accusation of murder serves the need of the drama—and Emmanuel comes very near tasting steel. Then he slowly fades from the scene. Heidelberg, Basel, Zürich and Lucerne glimpse him; his way is toward the high Alps, the lonely heights of Alfred Allmers and all such soaring mystics. In the spring a rigid, crouching corpse is found in the snow above St. Gothard, beside it a sheet of paper with the scrawled words: "The mystery of the kingdom?"

Hauptmann's story is painstaking, penetrating, more than a little profound. He has got pretty close to the fundamentals of religious enthusiasm; if he has not actually interpreted Christ, then he has at least interpreted the impulse to Christliness. And he has interpreted, too, what may be called the external effects of that impulse—its carrying of conviction to simple minds, its psychic prolificness, its tendency to awaken atavistic emotions. Emmanuel's followers swing incessantly from extravagant devotions to extravagant debauches. They are brothers to the bawling darkeys of our camp meetings; more than once

he has to go among them more as policeman than as messiah; some of them are never far from the jail gate. But the dignity and serenity of Emmanuel himself are never broken by that contact. He is a figure sketched reverently and at full length; there is in him a persistent reality. Where the book fails is in its accentuation of the disputative side of the man—in its halting with Emmanuel the rabbi to the cost of Emmanuel the prophet and seer. There are long debates with various theologians—pastors, rival hedge preachers, amateurs of the divine mysteries. Well, Hauptmann is a German, and the Germans, like the Scandinavians, have a taste for that sort of thing. Do you remember the first act of Björnson's "Beyond Human Power," with its soporific gabbling of parsons? We of English speech have an instinctive dislike of argumentation in fiction. Even when it is a duel of wit, an incandescent exchange of heresies, as in "Man and Superman," we turn from it quickly, and seek scenes wherein the arms of heroes span the diaphragms of heroines and the thought is less than the kiss. Here Hauptmann fails—at least for us. But in a larger way he does not fail at all. His book is a careful, an incisive, an arresting piece of work.

"THE CASE OF RICHARD MEYNELL," by Mrs. Humphry Ward (*Doubleday-Page*)—a return to the theme and manner of "Robert Elsmere," thoughtful, elegant, but I fear uninspired. "THE BEACON," by Eden Phillpotts (*Lane*)—another tale of Dartmoor and its simple folk. "THE SONG OF RENVY," by Maurice Hewlett (*Scribner*)—Hewlett in an expansive, golden mood—a picturesque romance to warm the cockles of your heart. Not Brazenhead himself, Third Murderer to the Duke of Milan, is a more engaging scoundrel than Gernulf de Salas, Earl of Pikpoyntz, with his lonely castle upon the heights above the Valley of Stones, his regiments of ruffians at Cantacute and Montgrace and his mysterious business North and South. One fine autumn day, returning to Pikpoyntz from the South, the Earl brings a pretty captive upon his saddle-bow—the little Lady Sabine, to wit—

twelve years old and with the grand manner of an empress. "She is a dead man's daughter. Guard her well and let her want for nothing." That is all the information about her that he vouchsafes to good Father Sorges, his chaplain, or even to pale Blanchmains, his favorite among the maids of the hall. A taciturn, saturnine fellow. And little Lady Sabine is taciturn, too—that is, until Father Sorges, after the Earl's departure, insists upon enrolling her name and pedigree in the great register of Pikpoynitz. "Names, my child?" asks His Reverence suavely, his pen in hand. "Sabine de Renny," answers the Lady Sabine—and Father Sorges drops his pen and his jaw, and his eyes pop from their sockets. "Are you," he gasps, "a Renny of Coldscaur?" The Lady Sabine stiffens in her chair. "No," she says, "no, Father, I am *the* Renny of Coldscaur!" Well, well, what do you think of that? The bad Earl Gernulf has gone and done it surely! The Coldscaur house is of royal, almost of imperial blood, and *the* Renny is its head. Here now is that august personage, a maid of twelve, captive at Pikpoynitz! Just how the bad Earl nabbed her—how he first slew her papa and her mamma and then took her—and how, in the end, he pays for his black sins with his blood—all this you must read in Mr. Hewlett's charming book. What other scrivening gentlemen can tell such tales so well? What other can make the gay days of marauding earl and fighting bishop, of pious troubadour and unwashed lady so real?

Novels! Novels! "LOVE'S PURPLE," by S. Ella Wood Dean (*Forbes*)—amateurish balderdash, with characters creaking in every joint. "FLOWER O' THE PEACH," by Perceval Gibbon (*Century Co.*)—a study of color prejudice in South Africa, distinctive in style and handling, the work of a man who has something genuine to say. "THE INNOCENCE OF FATHER BROWN," by Gilbert K. Chesterton (*Lane*)—twelve detective stories by the cleverest of Englishmen, which is as if one said twelve Wiener waltzes by Richard Strauss. "FIND THE WOMAN," by Gelett Burgess (*Bobbs-Merrill*)—thirteen grotesques worthy of

Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann—a book full of ingenuity and humor. I descend to cataloguing, forced feeding; the pyramid of novels *must* be brought down! "SHIP'S COMPANY," by W. W. Jacobs (*Scribner*)—you know Jacobs; you know his mirthful yarns. Here are a dozen of them. "THE GRIP OF FEAR," by Maurice Level (*Kennerley*)—a French thriller, a best seller from some boulevard paper. "THE HAUNTED PHOTOGRAPH," by Ruth McEnery Stuart (*Century Co.*)—four short stories, including two very good ones about darkies. "PANDORA'S BOX," by J. A. Mitchell (*Stokes*)—a romance with an American for hero and the daughter of an English earl for heroine—and Mr. Mitchell's inevitable touch of the spookish. "PETER AND WENDY," by J. M. Barrie (*Scribner*)—a sort of "novelization," whimsical and delightful, of "Peter Pan," itself a dramatization of an earlier book. "INTERVENTIONS," by Georgia Wood Pangborn (*Scribner*)—such good short stories as "The Rubber Stamp" and "Rasselas in the Vegetable Kingdom"; such bad short stories as "A Tempered Wind"—but more good than bad.

"A BED OF ROSES," by W. L. George (*Brentano*), which now halts us for a space, has made a considerable *succès de scandale* in English where it is still regarded as somewhat shocking to discuss a *fille de joie* from any standpoint save those of penology and theology. Here we have the story of a woman who makes deliberate choice of the primrose path—and lives to be sincerely thankful for her action. The widow of an army officer who has drunk himself to death in India, she returns to London with thirty pounds in her pocket and no kith nor kin nor even friend save a priggish brother teaching nonsense in some remote and God-forsaken boys' school. She has no trade or profession; she is not too well educated; the business of getting work is difficult. After a long and heartbreaking wait, during which she sees her little hoard shrink day by day, she finally gets the post of companion to the wife of a wealthy cement manufacturer, fresh from the Midlands. Life in

that mausoleum of a house is dull beyond all description, but there are fires in the grates and three meals a day—and Victoria Fulton cannot ask too much. But one day the son of the house, half jackass and half poet, grabs her in the hall and kisses her—and she is discharged on the spot. She is perfectly innocent; she has not encouraged him in the slightest; her actual feeling toward him is that of disgust—but the virtue of the home must be preserved. Hard days for Victoria! She narrowly escapes the meshes of a white slaver; she starves genteely in an eighth rate boarding house; she fights, in the end, for a waitress's job in a tea shop. And there she remains for two or three years, until finally a vagrant customer, a queer reader of queer books, fills her with that Unrest of which the Socialists discourse. Why be a slave forever, serving tea and scones to libidinous clerks? Varicose veins impend; the future is black. Why not turn upon Society and ravish it of its sweets?

Thus it is that Victoria passes under the protection of Major Thomas Cairnes, R.A., ret., and thus it is that she finds herself, when he is killed by Irish tenants, in possession of a thousand pounds. Next the Vesuvius, an all-night restaurant, and a long succession of light loves. Finally young John Holt, whose kiss cost her her first job. John is still half jackass and half poet. He falls an easy victim to Victoria's smile—and when at last his mother rescues him he is ready for a sanatorium and Victoria has ten thousand pounds! The last scene is a pastoral. Victoria has taken a little house at Cumberleigh, somewhere in the shires. She is a well-to-do and estimable widow, lately returned from the United States. The rector of Cumberleigh finds her very charitable. The bachelor squire of Cumberleigh finds her a devilishly charming woman.

Altogether excellent is "THE GODS AND MR. PERRIN," by Hugh Walpole (*Century Co.*), a tragi-comedy with its scenes laid in an English prep. school. But the concern of the author is not with the boys, but with their teachers—their teachers, their teachers' *amours* and

their teachers' wives. Here we are among unfamiliar fauna. What sort of man is the man who has rammed Latin and algebra into the heads of twelve-year-olds for twenty years? What sort of woman is his wife? Mr. Walpole tries to show us, and in the showing he produces a story of quite extraordinary merit—a story with real people in it and genuine emotion and that incisive humor which gets beneath the skin. If you miss every other novel I notice this month, don't miss this one. And don't miss "THE MAN WHO UNDERSTOOD WOMEN," by Leonard Merrick (*Kennerley*), sixteen short stories without a bad one in the lot. You will doubtless remember Mr. Merrick as the author of "Conrad in Quest of His Youth," which I ventured to recommend to you four or five months ago. Here is the same extravagant fancy, the same touch of sentiment, the same accomplished handling of incident and character. The ideal book for a gloomy Sunday. It will take you to Montmartre and give you back your youth.

Comes now—a considerable drop—"THE LAST GALLEY," by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (*Doubleday-Page*). There are eighteen tales in this collection of short stories and ten of them are not short stories at all, as the term is ordinarily understood, but "pictures of the past . . . between actual story and actual history." One of them, for example, describes the destruction of the last Carthaginian galley in that famous sea fight which made Rome mistress of the seas and sent Roman plows through the dusty field that once was Carthage. A moral for England is in the tale, and it is well rubbed in. Another describes the coming of the barbarians to Rome; a third the departure of the last Roman legion from Britain; a fourth the first invasion of Saxons—and so on. The plan promises entertainment, but I cannot report that Sir Arthur displays much skill in the execution of it. Most of the tales are entirely lacking in what our native dramatists call the punch. The eight short stories proper are slightly better. But even here there is seldom a rise above mediocrity.

SHOPPING FOR THE SMART SET

By Marion C. Taylor

THE SMART SET SHOPPING DEPARTMENT will be glad to answer questions regarding shopping and the New York shops. Readers of THE SMART SET inquiring where articles described are purchasable should enclose a stamp for reply, and state page and month. Purchasing done free of charge. Address: "EDITOR, SMART SET SHOPPING DEPARTMENT."

I READ in a thoroughly reliable New York newspaper the other day, for they do say that one or two of them are that, that "shoppers' cramp" is the new disease of the holiday season.

At a first glance I took it to mean the familiar pocketbook cramp that we all experience on January first, but no, it seems that this is a real bodily pain, every bit as acute as the other well-known variety, and comes from too much shopping, attacking one in the arms, neck and other vulnerable spots. It did not suggest a cure, but possibly a sea trip to southern climates would put one right, and I feel bound to state that I do believe there is such a thing as "shoppers' cramp," for the SMART SET SHOPPING DEPARTMENT is only just drawing a gasping breath of relief, and that has undoubtedly been its ailment. Its office still shows wisps of excelsior in the corners, and its only regret is that it cannot indulge in the cure but may only gaze at straw hats and thin frocks and wish itself one of the lucky wearers. It is still a little early to see much of anything new, but the few things I have peeped at are just as pretty as they can be, which helps so much, for sometimes these very early things are so monotonous that it hardly pays to mention them.

Paris has gone in for a few ideas lately, the influence of which we shall undoubtedly feel over here. I notice that many of the French photographs show very

large hats with one lone upstanding plume, very chic but very hard on milliner and wearer, so apt to be ludicrous instead of smart. The French are still encouraging plaids, and a prominent Avenue tailor told me he was going to feature them this spring—in combination with plain materials of course; but don't ask me if they are going to take for I feel as the tailor said he did: "It's a gamble. Maybe people will like them; maybe not." I think they're excellent, but it's all up to the woman who will wear them.

There is a new material for tailor costumes which is not unlike a Bedford cord. It resembles somewhat corduroy, and is remarkably light in weight, coming in a full line of attractive shades.

Spring Cottons

But most delightful of all is the line of so-called cottons, embracing practically everything which does not come under the heading of silk or cloth. They range from the daintiest of marquisesettes to the roughest of linen crash, which reminds me of the novelties of the season, one of the most important of which is the new Cossack crash which we saw made up last year but were unable to buy by the yard. Do you remember the line of suits and frocks which the better class shops showed last season in a coarse mesh linen, with a border composed of two or three bands of filet work—re-

sembling drawnwork? These are now shown in the most wonderful colors, with variations of the bands of filet work at the bottom—sometimes showing large self-color coin dots between the bands, or again a band of fringe at the bottom which a clever modiste will probably cut off and use as a trimming. The smartest color shown in this and other similar materials is the exact color of crash toweling, and is called Russian crash. The material itself is quite properly named *toile filet*, and sells from two dollars and twenty-five cents a yard up and is some fifty-four inches or so wide.

Next in order of novelty come the toweling materials, which are called Turkish crash, and I think are the smartest possible things for tailored frocks, as they give the exact effect of ratine. So far I have only seen them in white, cream and the Russian crash shade, but these three tones would naturally be the most desirable. It is a material I am quite enthusiastic over; it comes fifty inches wide, one dollar and a half a yard, and looks as if it would wear forever. Do not get the idea from its name that it looks like a bath towel, for it isn't anything like so coarse but is exactly like ratine with its surface covered by fine little knobs.

Another novelty is in the piqués, which have been steadily coming to the fore the last few years. This year they have come with a jump, and are so new and gorgeous that except for their well-known corded effect you would not recognize them. The prettiest of them show a colored mercerized cord of various widths, and I was quite in love with some in Roman effect which combine such stripes as pastel blue and cool green, both edged with a tiny black thread separating them from the dividing lines of white. Another shows brilliant blue and chocolate treated in the same manner, while a third is particularly feminine in a grayish mauve and pink. You understand that these stripes are only an eighth of an inch or so wide. But wider was a very distinguished one with dull gray stripes, while a host of them more conservative showed pretty pink and blue stripes. Another season's nov-

elty is called motor linen, and is a combination of jute and linen giving a silk effect not unlike pongee. All sorts of wonderful things are said of its possibilities in the dust shedding line. I believe it is guaranteed to shed everything but an oncoming motor itself. It comes in shades of natural linen, fifty inches wide. One more novelty shown in this shop, which carries by far the most complete and unusual line shown in town, is the linen-embroidered robes. I remarked at the fineness of the linen and the beautiful work of the embroiderer, a combination not easy to find, and when I found that the price of a profusely embroidered robe was but twelve dollars I simply said, "How did it happen?" and this is the story.

You know the Japanese do this embroidery wonderfully, and you probably have also had sad experience with the poor quality of linen they use. This buyer foresaw the possibilities of well made (gored, not circular skirts) robes of good linen beautifully embroidered at reasonable prices, so he sent good linens from Paris eastward to Yokohama, and good patterns of embroidery suitable to American tastes from New York westward to meet the linens. As he said, "They were married, and these robes are the result." If only all results were as successful!

Marquisesettes

Popular as ever, the new marquisesettes are the most beautiful things you could imagine. Coming with openwork, hem-stitched stripes, their borders show the Oriental influence which is over all fashions, not only in their patterns, which are often conventionalized Persian designs, but again in the wonderful blending of the colors. Such combinations—each prettier than the last! Soft-toned mauves blend with dull biscuit and brilliant yellow shades, with here and there a bit of cool leaf green, not forgetting the ever present touch of black to define the pattern. Another will be a combination of soft military gray, blue and red, remarkably cool and fresh-looking. Then a simple smart pattern has a border of

black in a satiny finish which is most striking. Nothing appealed to me more, however, than the crêpes coming in the most unusually beautiful pastel shades I have ever seen, with a border of a sort of woolen embroidery in white. I cannot begin to tell you how simple but appealingly cool they look. The soft muslins, too, with their hemstitched stripes and embroidered dots in colors, seem especially suited to hot days. When I say nets, I hope you will call to mind the French tulle and not picture those coarse things usually made up with quantities of cheap lace, for the first are just as delightful as the latter are dreadful. Nets are especially good this season, and I am glad, for not only have they lain dormant for some time but they are a splendid buy for the woman who cannot afford the poor wearing qualities of the fine muslins. These nets come in exquisite border design much like the winter chiffons, and are delightful for formal summer frocks, keeping their appearance so well and not looking like a string after the first wearing. They are admirable, too, for summer evening frocks. I think I could use up all the rest of my space telling you about this line of goods, but I must not forget the hats and other things you want to know about.

Silks

At a prominent importing house I saw a day or so ago a beautiful line of spring silks that were notable for their variety and the beauty of the colors. As you probably know, if you have noticed the trend of fashion, the tendency is toward everything old-fashioned, and nowhere is this shown more clearly than in the types of silks shown and in the range of colors. For instance, a double-faced grosgrain, so soft that it is impossible to wrinkle it, comes in two shades of fawn, two shades of dove gray, or slate, all the soft essentially feminine shades our mothers wore in the sixties and seventies. A so-called *drap de Paris* comes in most unusual color combinations; for instance, a dull tan—a doe shade I should call it—is striped with pin stripes

of a bottle green about a half-inch apart and has a satin back of the same shade. Again the shades are a soft gray and concord, the new grape shade; another shows blue and magenta and so on.

The softest of soft changeable taffetas come in most beautiful tones; and fine silks soft but heavy are called *faïlle merveilleuse*, and are especially smart in black and white. A cross between a marquissette and a grenadine is called a crochet veiling, and is admirable for draping over another color. Unusual is a material, half of which is a *voile ninon*, of white for instance, with a large coin dot in black, the other half of satin in black with the same dot in white. It comes in such smart combinations as empire green and black, and has endless possibilities in the costume line.

Etoffe épatante is a soft silk coming in a full line of exquisite shades, while another soft silk called *rave souple fantaisie* would be admirable for *trolley* frocks, as it is wrinkle proof and comes in such tones as serpent green striped with fine stripes of a dull oak yellow, slate color, dregs of wine and a host of other equally attractive combinations. One of the prettiest of all is the so-called *soie Arlequin*, a dull satin-finished foulard with tiny old-fashioned patterns sprinkled neatly over the surface. The quaintness and attraction again lie in the unusually artistic colors which have the boldness of hand-blocked chintzes except that the background is darker and slightly changeable in effect, which softens it. I am ever so much in favor of these patterns. You may remember I wrote them up last year when I first saw them in foulards, and I saw one or two afterward on people who go in for really smart clothes, for of course these patterns will never become very popular among the crowd, at least I hope not.

A new weave semi-diagonal has appeared in the heavy silk whipcord serges, which will be no end popular for suits, coming as they do in black and blue and such combinations besides the staple colors. This house which sells to the best dressmakers and tailors has a line of taffetas that are called indestructible and cannot be broken. They are really

guaranteed, and their softness and fineness of weave make the statement most plausible. A *voile meteor* is soft as chiffon and satiny in effect, and has a wonderful chiffon border of coin dots inclosed in block squares, daring but very successful.

Woolens

Although the spring is much more important, from a silk point of view, the woolens are not to be forgotten, and we have two distinct novelties in suitings this year that are worth mentioning. Like the cotton toweling described a moment ago comes the woolen *tyl-tyl*, just as smart as it can be and coming in the very newest shades, prominent among which are Paris tan, very like our old friend champagne, cinnamon brown or russet, Callot blue, an unusual mouse-like gray and so on. A second novelty I mentioned briefly in the beginning of this article is wool corduroy. It comes in black with a faint suggestion of dull blue or white between the lines, white with a dull blue, and a black and white, all of which are most attractive. Striped whipcord serges in white show a narrow corded silk stripe in various combinations, while a most attractive shade of cinnamon brown, russet or whatever you want to call it, the same color I told you last fall that Paris was wearing, shows a fine almost indistinguishable stripe of red about one half an inch apart that may not sound effective but undoubtedly is. The half-and-half idea written up in the silks is here shown, one-half in white whipcord, the other black and white, coming in various width stripes.

Hats

I saw a line of hats the other day at a shop noted particularly for its smart tailored hats, every one of which was excellent. There were about fifteen or twenty of them, and all but two or three were black and white. Nothing, as you know, is better style, and, whisper it softly, nothing is more salable for an early hat than this combination. I think my favorite was a simple, not large, not small, shape of white hemp

with its brim upturning a trifle at the side front, its entire top, round crown and all covered with black satin, while a small black brush extended from the top of the crown at the side back.

Another shape with a great deal of dash to it was a small affair, its top almost covered by a huge two-eared black velvet bow, one of those bows that has no end of distinctiveness to it, for you know they say it takes the cleverest of milliners to tie a really smart bow. An unusually imposing shape, turning quite high front and back and ending in almost a point at one side, was treated in two ways. For dress it was developed in Leghorn, faced with black hatters' plush, more familiarly known as silk beaver; at the back, to one side, was posed a splendid black feather. The second development was of white hemp faced with midnight blue and trimmed with a white owl's head, both particularly stunning hats. Most of these hats were successful chiefly in their simplicity of trimming and the excellent lines of their shapes. None of them were either very large or very small, but all had a distinct air of individuality. A delightful garden hat, which would be ideal for bridesmaid wear, was a simple medium large shape slightly mushroomed made of delicate blue chiffon and white net, trimmed with a wreath of pink ribbon roses delicately handpainted which lay flat on the brim. It was the airiest, daintiest, most feminine thing imaginable.

For the Children

A most interesting so-called "Educational Series" of phonograph records has recently been placed on the market; these have been so delightfully selected that one entirely loses sight of their value in an educational way, proving, I think, that they are bound to be very successful in their mission with children, who learn so quickly by such methods.

The series starts with real kindergarten songs, among the most delightful of which are those sung by the Misses Gaynor, whose mother is well known as the composer of music to "The Ginger

Bread Man" and many Mother Goose rhymes. Then one must not overlook "Heiden Röslein," dear to German and American children alike, which is given in English by Evan Williams. Eugene Fields's "Child and Mother," the music by Voigtlaender, and his "Wynken, Blynken and Nod" are old favorites of mine, while Alma Gluck contributes a very tender "Bohemian Cradle Song."

For children a little older some excellent duets, among them the familiar German song "The Foot Traveler" (Franz Abt), are beautifully given by Mrs. Wheeler and Miss Dunlap. For students in the higher grades Schubert's "Hark, Hark, the Lark" and the "Good Night" quartet from Flotow's "Martha" are favorites, as are also "Santa Lucia," "Die Wacht am Rhein" and a charming Scotch ballad by Lucy Marsh, folk songs from several countries which give children a general idea of the tendencies of the music of the different nationalities.

To Stimulate Circulation

Many women are familiar with the beneficial effects due to a half-hour or so spent in a face mask, but unfortunately this necessitates a visit to a specialist and means a couple of hours' time at least. If you can give it, and if the treatment affects you as it does most women and gives the face a firm, healthy feeling, producing splendid circulation which does away with the need of cosmetics, by all means spend the time; but so many of us find ourselves fatigued at six o'clock, with a dinner engagement at eight, and all the cosmetics in the world won't give the complexion the clear, healthy look that good circulation produces. Consequently a new liquid just launched by a thoroughly reliable concern ought to find a warm welcome, for it is nothing more than a preparation which, when spread on the face, dries and forms a mask, which, if left on for twenty minutes or so, stimulates circulation and gives a fine color and a general effect of health and vigor to the face.

Gowns for Southern Wear

It is still a little early to see much in the line of thin gowns, but by the time this article is published the shops will be full of them; and if the few I have seen are at all typical, as I believe them to be, they will certainly be attractive. I saw a lovely line of fine lingerie frocks in one shop that were remarkably good values, starting with a very fine marquissette frock trimmed with a quantity of narrow filet insertion, a little Cluny lace and a touch of embroidery, finished with a smart black velvet sash, for eighteen dollars and fifty cents. I do not care how handsome a wardrobe one may have, this frock would not be put to shame, for it is fine and dainty and an excellent model.

For forty-nine dollars and fifty cents another fine marquissette model—and this marquissette can hardly be distinguished from handkerchief linen—had a deep border of hand embroidery at the bottom, and was beautifully trimmed with narrow Cluny lace which ran in two rows down either hip and showed a trimming of white pearl buttons between. These buttons, about the size of a ten-cent piece, are a prominent note of trimming on many of the new models.

A particularly handsome model, again of sheer marquissette, had a very deep band of handsome filet lace above the hem and was beautifully embroidered in delicate eyelet work. Narrow filet lace helped to make it a particularly good dress for eighty-nine fifty. It looked as though it cost one hundred and twenty-five dollars at the least.

In the linens for morning wear I found two stunning models in *toile filet* (described under "Cottons"). One had an apronlike front to the skirt, and a half-circle effect to the waist above the belt, of the openwork part, which was further used as a trimming, as were bullet-shaped crochet buttons. A description, I am afraid, gives but little idea of it, for it is one of the best linen models I have ever seen; the price is forty-five dollars. A second one in this same material came in white, but was prettiest

in cream embroidered between the rows of filet work in dull French blue. Its only other trimming was a round collar of very heavy Irish lace which encircled the Dutch neck. This again showed a semi-circle trimming on the waist, its interior of the filet work piped and finished at the top with blue crochet buttons. The skirt was an unusually new and attractive one—price fifty-nine dollars and fifty cents.

A third of the same material owed its style to its simplicity and good lines. It was one of those popular button-down-the-front models, pearl buttons the size of a quarter being used, and was finished at the neck by a satin band with a double frill, one up and one down, of plaited net. This, which is a French idea not especially easy to wear successfully, could easily be dispensed with. A touch which distinguished the frock was its narrow white kid belt. Thirty-nine fifty was its quite reasonable price.

At another shop where one is sure of finding good models at very moderate prices they have a splendid selection this season. A delightfully simple net model is very handsomely embroidered and trimmed with narrow baby Irish lace insertion of a fine quality, with a wider variety showing on the waist. It is further distinguished by a chiffon sash of a warm flame tone, and is priced at forty-eight dollars and fifty cents. Another model of a heavier nature is of white marquisette trimmed in straight lines, with a wide, heavy embroidery that is very smart indeed; price thirty-four fifty. But one of the prettiest of all happens to be in one of the materials I particularly recommended, the crêpe with the embroidered border. This frock is in white combined with chiffon or marquisette of a very soft French blue and further trimmed with narrow filet and Irish lace. I haven't seen a prettier little afternoon frock in a long while, and it costs only thirty-two dollars and fifty cents, which seems so very reasonable to me when I know how expensive the material is by the yard.

One of those very necessary dark one-piece linen frocks comes in a smart coat-like model, with a one-sided lapel-like

vest of piqué, which is also used to pipe the round black satin collar and the cuffs to the long tight-fitting sleeves. This is fourteen seventy-five, and another around the same price shows the one-sided slanting effect so well liked this season. It buttons with white pearl buttons from one side of the back at the waist line up over the shoulder in a slanting line, and down the front from one side to the other ending at knee depth. A very pretty white serge model has a little coat intended to be worn as a waist, that is typically French in its little Russian blouse effect, attractively trimmed like the skirt with pearl buttons, and further enhanced by white silk braid with a touch of bright color at the revers.

Linens

A mail order house here in town is making a specialty of linens for household use at prices particularly reasonable, as they deal direct with factory and consumer and save the latter the so-called "middleman's" profit. Their linens are of a high grade of Irish manufacture, and are most attractive and of a wide variety. Towels of a particularly high grade sell for six dollars a dozen, and tablecloths and bed linens are accordingly reasonable in price.

Many of the tablecloths show the new round pattern, intended, of course, for the round tables so much in vogue at present. The bed linen is of a particularly high grade. Hemstitched and embroidered pillow cases, twenty-two by thirty-six inches, sell for three dollars and seventy-five cents a pair. Bed spreads of sheer linen, beautifully hand-embroidered, are only twelve dollars each. Besides this, a line of piece goods, such as sheer linen, cambric, long cloth and English nainsook, is carried at prices cheaper than those current in the dry-goods shops.

At this time of the year this news seems to me particularly appropriate, especially that about the piece goods, as so many women are busy making underwear, and these things are usually rather hard to find at such reasonable prices.

WHERE SHALL WE GO?

By Philip Ames

IT has been said of the wealthy classes of America—and it is doubtless very true—that they live in their own homes less than they live elsewhere. A trip to Europe in the spring, a sojourn at the seaside or in the mountains in the summer, and a few weeks' "change" and rest (?) in the South or in the West in winter—this is the programme.

"Now is the winter of our discontent." Everyone who has leisure is seized with a disturbing desire to be on the move. The lure of the sun is getting in its potent work. The waving palms are beckoning, the tepid waves, lapping on silver beaches are calling, the perfumed breezes blowing through the groves of coral islands are singing their siren song, "Come to me, come to me, come." The message is irresistible. "I must away, I must away."

But where? That is the eternal question. And what mistakes people make in answering it! How they follow "the bell cow" year after year! How they flock to this resort and to that, often for no other reason than because "everybody" is going there. The insidious appeal of the society column bristling with imposing names is forever being made to men and women too tired or too bored to search for some resort exactly suited to their special needs. Thus men who never held a golf stick are lured to Pinehurst or quiet ladies with their knitting are set down amid the gaiety and giddiness and wondrous plumage of Palm Beach, while others are wafted to places on the travel map quite unsuited to them, simply through lack of knowledge and foresight.

THE SMART SET, therefore, would here suggest the attractions of various

resorts patronized and recommended by its readers, in the hope that not a few weary women yearning for repose and brain-fagged business men longing for outdoor life and new interests may find profit in the suggestions made.

The golf lover or rider or shooter who has a few weeks at his disposal and who is driven by snow and wintry winds from his home course, or his usual haunts, will be apt to decide that Pinehurst, N. C., with its three eighteen-hole golf courses in the pink of condition, its private shooting preserve of forty thousand acres with guides and well trained dogs available, its trap shooting, horseback riding and other sports, is the only place for him to go. He may enjoy the privacy of a cottage or the delightful life in any one of four hotels, and the golfer has in his favor the fact that he may always find congenial partners for a twosome or a foursome, or if he elects to enter a large tournament to show his mettle, this too is possible with the weekly events always in progress. The warmer climate of Georgia takes many golfers to Augusta where the Hotel Bon Air and the Hampton Terrace Hotel both have excellent courses; or if a tropical climate is more alluring, then the East Coast of Florida welcomes one to Miami, Palm Beach, Ormond, and St. Augustine, where excellent golf is always available.

Possibly one may long for a foreign touch, and this may be had without journeying to the Old World. For Bermuda and Jamaica, both English colonies, have the most charming of hotels and there are the picturesque army posts and the flavor of the English colonial

society which many agree is even more attractive than in the tight little island itself. Waving palms and tropical flowers counteract the chilliness that one is liable to encounter at the first plunge into the tea table element. Mexico offers many fascinating excursions, most of which are personally conducted, and one might well imagine himself in old Spain, there where soft-eyed señoritas, lace mantillas and the seductive Spanish tongue cast their spell upon one; in Havana, too, the Spanish atmosphere is delightful and the next thing to being in Seville or Madrid or Barcelona is a sojourn in the City of Mexico or the Cuban metropolis. Panama may now be visited with comfort and safety and the wonderful work going on there is worth going thousands of miles to see.

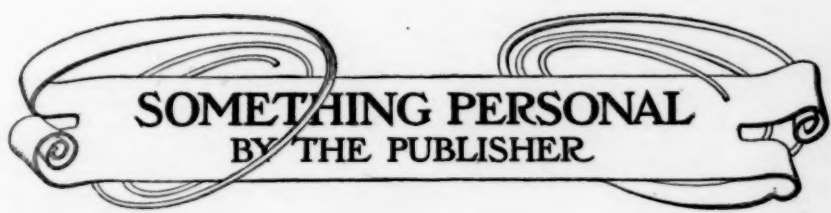
California is the mecca of many, and all along the southern coast where the feet of snow-capped hills dip into the azure Pacific, one may enjoy the life of the wonderful great hotels at Coronado, San Diego, Santa Barbara and Monterey, or may go down to one's morning plunge from Catalina Island, La Jolla or some others of the many seaside resorts. You may elect to "bungalow" in Pasadena, that earthly Paradise, or to winter in some of the inland towns such as Redlands, San Bernardino or the suburbs of Los Angeles.

Mardi Gras is an excuse for a final fling before donning sackcloth and ashes, and one may go to two extremes to spend it, to New Orleans, with its quaint Old World atmosphere, its dusky Creole beauties and the wondrous pageant of the King of the Carnival, or to another city, far to the north, the quaint old French city of New France or Quebec. In one, roses and tropical warmth; in the other, winter sunshine over the pristine purity of snow undefiled such as no other city in America can show, and the pageant of carnival in

crisp, frosty air which exhilarates and gives new life.

Apart from the carnival, winter sports of all sorts lure one to Canada, where tobogganing, snowshoeing, skiing, skating, sliding and sleighing in quaint red carioles may be indulged in during all the winter until well into March. Quebec and New Orleans can both give, in January, seasons of French opera which solve the problem of "what to do in the evening." Canada is not alone in offering winter sports and the exhilarating exercises of winter; for the Adirondacks, where the Lake Placid Club is open all the winter; the Mansion House at the famous resort of Poland Springs, Maine; Woodstock Inn at Woodstock, Vermont; and many White Mountain resorts, including Sugar Hill, Jackson and Intervale, North Conway and Colebrook and many others, keep open house during the winter months. The Appalachian Mountain Club first started the fad of winter mountain climbing, which is enjoyed in the Adirondacks and the White Hills, and no one who has experienced the joy of a winter camping trip will believe it possible to extract such keen enjoyment from cross country pilgrimages on snowshoes through the virgin forest. Within a day's journey from New York are half a hundred resorts, each offering its own peculiar attractions; and if one cannot decide where to go from these suggestions, then let him engage his passage for some Orient Cruise and seek foreign shores, for his little Lenten Journey, in the land of the Pyramids or along the Riviera. But if he goes that far, let him go further, let him go even to the Philippines, where he will see a land of very great beauty and interest and a people in course of transformation, under the benevolent tutelage of our own country. A magnificent new American hotel has just been opened at Manila, and that means comfort and luxury for the visitor to the Philippines.





SOMETHING PERSONAL BY THE PUBLISHER

THOUGH as a rule I try to avoid what a modern essayist neatly calls "the toboggan slide of alliteration," I wish, before quoting part of a letter from one of our readers in a famous cathedral town in England, to coast swiftly down the statement that the passive prejudice against THE SMART SET is passing. And now the letter:

"I take this opportunity of paying a very sincere tribute of appreciation and affection for my favorite magazine. Whatever comes or goes each month, THE SMART SET *must* be bought. And each month, whatever my mood, it answers directly to it. I'm most tickled to death at times, when I take THE SMART SET on the cars to read it, and watch the eyes and mouths of the suburban population making round O's at it and me. I believe half of them regard it as a handbook to Hades, and the other half would like to read it in secret, and are disappointed and baffled when they discover that, in place of being suggestive, it is just plain clever and cultured and artistic. It's IT. Long may you wave."

A graphic picture that, of the primitive minds condemning something that they do not know. And a very just characterization, too, of the New SMART SET as it really is.

Out on the Pacific slope, another friend of ours has been reading THE SMART SET on the train. In this case, however, no guileless suburbanite, but the reader himself was perturbed. This was the paragraph which affronted him:

"Show me," requested our dramatic critic, "an individual who cries 'Shaw imitator' whenever he encounters an honest opinion expressed in words of less than seven syllables, and I will show you an individual who hails Theodore Roosevelt as the typical American, who is a persistent devotee of clambakes, who wears a small compass as a watch fob, who believes all he reads about the white slave traffic, who smokes a cigar in his bathing suit, who is of the firm opinion that Harold MacGrath is a greater craftsman and a deeper reporter than Upton Sinclair and who is similarly fitted by taste and thought for a high place in American municipal politics, in poultry journalism or on such library boards as bar Robert Herrick's 'Together' and Brieux's 'Damaged Goods' from the public shelves."

Such was the seed our critic sowed; herewith the whirlwind that we reaped:

Now I am not an individual who is stuck on clambakes (never ate a clam in my life that I know of), nor one that believes all the white slave dope that the reformers, who love to wallow in mire, hand out to print, nor one that has any opinion of Harold MacGrath, nor one that would, as censor on library boards, declare the novels named to be in line for the Index Expurgatorius, nor, etc., etc., but I do wear a compass as a watch fob or chain pendant, which is the same in effect. Now, the writer of the article aforesaid does not say what sort of a compass he has in his mind—a freemason's emblem (square and compass) or the little trick that lines you up for the north. The latter is the sort of compass yours truly wears, and because he does so he protests more or less insistently that he should not be classed among

those who do or think the things which the writer believes warrant them being dumped beyond the pales of THE SMART SET. I have traveled to some extent and have always found my little compass most useful. Thus, when I walk northward at the next corner, after an evening at the Shaftesbury Theatre in London, under the impression that I am bound for Charing Cross, my little compass soon puts me right. It tells me that Market Street in Philadelphia runs east and west, when my senses would have it running north and south. It showed me that, by starting north from Fargate in Sheffield, then going apparently west and south, I arrived at a point east of where I started from. It kept the geographical relationship between the Boulevard des Italiens, the Champ de Mars, the Gare du Nord, the Hôtel des Invalides, etc., in order for me while I was in Paris. It put me right when my mental impressions steered me wrongly as to the direction of the Catalina Islands from San Pedro Harbor. I thought the Union Station of Frankfort-on-the-Main was east of the centre of the town; my compass told me the opposite. In Oklahoma City it told me I was looking north, when I could have sworn I had my eye turned southward. In Budapest the little instrument said a supposed direction was east, not south. Though I might write you an eulogistic essay on this little bit of jewelry, I will spare you. I hope, however, that I have said enough to indicate that it shows good, in fact, smart sense to wear a compass for a "watch charm" instead of some useless piece of jewelry, ornamental though it may be. A person who can happily combine use and ornament should not be voted out of the Smart Set.

It only remains for me to add that a man who can make a watch charm do service as a Baedeker in this fashion, is in a smart set all his own, and we are proud to know him. But why didn't he send his letter to our department for the revival of the lost art of letter writing?

You will have noticed our Trunk in the Attic frontispiece, of course. Wouldn't you like to rummage in such a fascinating garret as the artist has depicted? I feel sure it will interest many to know that Mr. Potter drew his in-

spiration from a real attic. His preliminary sketches were made in the old manor house of one of the famous Dutch families of New York, and his trunk is a real trunk which the curious may see for the asking. As regards the young person seated before the trunk, we shall be more reticent; we are not running a matrimonial bureau.

There is no doubt about the popularity of our new department. From ranches in the Southwest where typewriters are not, from remote provinces of Canada, from Europe, from Africa, even from Asia come the letters till The Trunk in the Attic threatens to burst its hinges. Many feel like the contributor in Southern California who writes:

The first thing I thought of when I saw your offer was, why has not someone done it before? Now little letters of all sorts pop out at me from all kinds of unexpected places: I just saw a humming bird flit by my window with a perfectly good one in his bill; as I cut the season's first pink rose this morning, a little girlie one leaped forth from its very heart; in the evening they boo at me from behind the electric light, and at breakfast they peep at me over the rim of my coffee cup. You will understand my dilemma, when I say that they even sit all night on the edge of my bed and exclaim in concert, "You know I am the best of all, so why not send me?" That is why I am enclosing an extra stamped, self-addressed envelope, to pacify my little sprites by finding out if possible whether one contributor can submit more than one letter. I think this will be a general inquiry, and believe it ought to be answered in the pages of the magazine.

We are glad to answer that general inquiry; a single contributor may submit more than one letter, but, save in exceptional cases, we cannot consider series of letters. The space of the department is too limited.

John Adam Thayer

P. S. This month we have inserted two pages under the heading, "Where Shall We Go?" It is not an advertisement as some gentle cynic might suppose, but information given for the guidance of our readers. Does it interest you?